



## AN A/R/TOGRAPHIC AND ARTS-BASED EXPLORATION OF LIVED EXPERIENCES IN COMPROMISED CONTEXTS

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Peneria Venessa Ansley George, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. George', with a stylized, cursive script.

3 November 2025

Signed

Date

## ABSTRACT

The compromised context during and post-COVID-19 provided a contextual frame for a situational inquiry into the lived experiences of individuals influenced by the phenomena of unemployment and drug substance dependent individuals in rural areas of the Western Cape, South Africa.

The rapid growth of literature on arts-based research (ABR) has opened new ways of thinking about how art links to novel research knowledge. It has enabled scholars to deepen their thinking on ABR, to explore the characteristics of thought, perception, and experience, and to engage with mystery and immerse themselves in the mysterious nature of practice and the phenomenon that it leans towards (Visse et al., 2019:7). Something that is unknown, unexplained, or not fully understood inviting interest in interpretation, investigation, and curiosity is referred to as mysterious. leaving room for several interpretations rather than a single decisive response.

ABR responds to a “trust-the-process” stance; the artist-researcher-teacher (a-r-t) dwells in the unexpected that the work requires (McNiff, 2008; Visse et al., 2019). Artistic expression encouraged participants to reflect and gain confidence in sharing their experiences, often revealing new insights through surprising results.

VOSviewer analysis revealed a gap in the literature on concepts like storytelling and creative reflection, which were present but not well-connected. In contrast, this study used arts-based research and A/R/Tography to focus on lived experience and reflection of the (a-r-t) and participants. A person's personal, everyday experience of the world, in the world and how life is truly felt, interpreted, and given meaning through thoughts, emotions, relationships, and actions, which is referred to as their "lived experience," as opposed to how it is explained in theory or statistics.

The gap pointed to a lack of integration, which the study aimed to address by bringing these ideas together through a creative and participatory lens.

The research questions for this study are: 1) How do people in compromised contexts experience their lived reality in a specific situation? This question explores the lived experiences of the target groups to gain a better understanding of their lived realities. 2) How can *in situ* interactions between the researcher as Artist and persons during creative processes lead to improved understanding of their lived realities and the ability to express these using newly obtained creative skills? This question explores engagements between the researcher and participants, probing lived experiences through teaching creative processes, with a focus on skills they learnt to express experiences and reflections through art. 3) What

insights can be gained from reflections as artistic expressions of lived experiences in compromised contexts? The focus is on developing the ability of both researcher (also a participant) and participants to reflect on their lived experiences through self-exploration and expression.

Situational inquiry was conducted through an A/R/Tography perspective, which guided this study by integrating interpretive phenomenology, arts-based research (ABR), and autoethnography to explore and express the lived experiences of individuals in compromised contexts. The researcher assumed three interconnected roles artist–researcher–teacher to engage creatively with the study’s concepts, data collection, and analysis through observation and reflection. As teacher, the researcher also facilitated the learning of creative methods involving knowing, doing, and making. The acronym CARER – Creator, Artist, Reflector, Ethnographer, Revealer – captured the integrated and complementary nature of these roles.

A thematic process was used to inductively code the data, after which the codes were grouped and categorised based on similarities and shared meanings to derive sub-themes that were then grouped into themes. This resulted in a list of themes for each data collection method for both cases. Recruitment was done by the respective participating organisations to support non-probabilistic, purposive, and convenience sampling. The sampling strategy allowed target-phenomenon-rich participants to form the basis of an initial understanding. Data were collected through observations, reflections, field notes, creative workshops, face-to-face and online data, and body mapping.

Findings were derived from collected data and interpreted to attach meaning. The findings indicate the following: the knowledge contribution includes insights into using creative processes in developing 21st-century skills based on the capabilities of youth Not in Education and Employment (NEET) and substance-abuse users in a complex context. Insights and knowledge were underpinned by arts-based research and A/R/Tography through an interpretive phenomenological lens. In addition, knowledge gained through integrated reflections at multiple levels informed the study. Furthermore, the theoretical contributions extended to the empirical research on using arts-based research and A/R/Tography through an interpretive phenomenological lens applied in complex contexts.

The pandemic posed risks to ethics. Many community-based practitioners struggled to build and maintain partnerships, relationships, or projects during the COVID-19 pandemic, and lowering ethical standards was not aligned with the (a-r-t). The employment of digital artistic methods during COVID-19 with NEET youth, the (a-r-t) maintained ethics.

Methodologically, the study contributed an integrated methodology that incorporated key aspects of complex phenomena, using creative processes. It combined methods of practice,



social science, design methods, and creative and practical methods into a suitable research methodology for practice-led, co-created, reflective design research.

Role of artist (practice-led phase): Together with the participants, online and in person, we expressed ourselves in creative ways to create artworks, utilising sustainable creative and body-mapping processes.

**Keywords:** NEET youth, substance-dependant individuals, A/R/Tography, arts-based research (ABR), Interpretive phenomenology, autoethnography, lived experience, situated practice.

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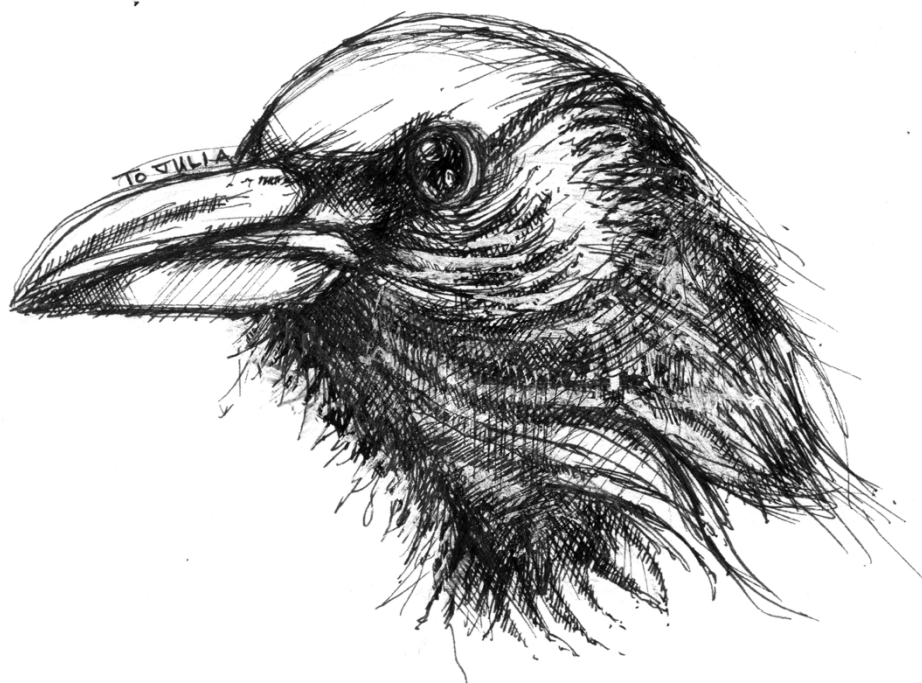
In addition, I also acknowledge: The financial assistance of the Academic Research Exchange Programme towards this research is acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this thesis and the conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Academic Research Exchange Programme.

For the research onion artworks, I draw my inspiration from the 'Research Onion' framework by Saunders et al. (2019). I am grateful for this insightful work, which not only shaped my academic understanding but also served as a creative catalyst for the research onion artworks. His personal recognition of my work was a great honour.

An image of the Research Onion, explicitly attributed to Saunders et al. (2018), is available in this academic publication repository ([https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Research-Onion-Saunders-et-al-2018\\_fig2\\_368534352](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Research-Onion-Saunders-et-al-2018_fig2_368534352))

## DEDICATION

In memory of Julia Brewis



## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

|          |                                                                                    |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABR      | Arts-based research                                                                |
| ART      | Role of being an artist, research and teacher within ABR                           |
| CARER    | Creator, Artist, Reflector, Ethnographer, Revealer                                 |
| CBRP     | Community-based Research Participative Project                                     |
| COVID-19 | CO – Corona<br>VI – Virus<br>D – Disease<br>19 – The year it was identified (2019) |
| CPUT     | Cape Peninsula University of Technology                                            |
| DTI      | Department of Trade and Industry                                                   |
| ECE      | Early Childhood Education                                                          |
| EPWP     | Extended Public Works Programme                                                    |
| GABRA    | Guiding ABR Assessment                                                             |
| GUTS     | Generalised Unsafety Theory of Stress                                              |
| IPA      | Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis                                                |
| NDP      | South African National Development Plan                                            |
| NEET     | Youth not in Employment, Education, or Training                                    |
| NGO      | Non-governmental Organization                                                      |
| PARTY    | Participatory Development with the Youth – EU Project                              |
| RAC      | Recovery at the Crossroads                                                         |
| SARS     | Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome                                                  |
| WHO      | World Health Organisation                                                          |
| YDS      | Youth Development Strategy                                                         |
| YEDS     | Youth Enterprise Development Strategy                                              |
| YEP      | Youth Employability Program                                                        |
| YES      | Youth Employment Service                                                           |
| YLMI     | Youth Labour Market Index                                                          |

## **GLOSSARY**

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A/R/Tography:        | A research approach that integrates art-making, teaching, and inquiry, where the creative process itself becomes a way of generating and understanding knowledge. It blends artistic practice with reflective research and pedagogy.                                                                                                                                       |
| Arts-based research: | A research approach that uses artistic processes and creative expression as primary methods to explore, represent, and communicate knowledge. To enable participants to create and interpret art as they explore and reflect on their lived experiences through a creative skills.                                                                                         |
| Autoethnography:     | Autoethnography texts are constructed as a detail description of a situation as experienced by the researcher, based on reflections of the self and experiences related to a life event and is situated in and influenced by the context. To reflect on lived experience in the artist-researcher-teacher roles when interacting with the participants in creative spaces. |
| Body mapping:        | A visual and creative method in which individuals reflect their physical, emotional, or experiential states on a body-shaped outline, often used to explore identity, trauma, health, or personal narratives.                                                                                                                                                              |
| Collograph:          | A printmaking technique in which textured materials are applied to a surface (plate) to create a relief, which is then inked and pressed onto paper to produce a print.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Creativity:          | Creativity is the capacity to respond to opportunities or challenges by creatively blending information, experience, and abilities to produce unique, significant ideas or activities.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Eco-dyeing:          | A natural fabric dyeing process that uses plant materials like leaves, flowers, and bark to create colour and patterns with ecofriendly chemicals. It is valued for being environmentally friendly and for producing unique, organic designs.                                                                                                                              |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Embodied reflection:                 | The process of exploring and understanding experiences through awareness of bodily perception, movements, and physical presence, often linking the body to thought and emotion.                                                                                                                                 |
| Interpretative Phenomenology:        | To understand the in-situ lived experiences of the participants.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis: | Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is a qualitative research approach used to explore how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences. It involves close consideration of personal accounts and interpreting the deeper significance of those experiences within their social and cultural context. |
| Lived experience:                    | The personal knowledge and understanding gained through direct, actual encounters with events, situations, or phenomena.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Vulnerable:                          | Groups or sensitive topics, which can include children, the elderly, substance abusers, refugees, and criminal activity.                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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## CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH ORIENTATION





## 1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I navigated adversity through a visual narrative exploration of lived experiences in compromised contexts. The intertwined stories of individuals facing compromised contexts unfolded as unique narratives of resilience, survival, and adaptation. This doctoral thesis pursued an engaging journey into the lived experiences of individuals who navigated adversity in diverse, challenging environments.

Through a visual narrative lens, the study aimed to elevate the voices often surpassed by complex circumstances, moving beyond traditional academic constraints to delve into the heart of their lived experiences. Beyond acknowledging challenges, the focus extended to the human capacity to find meaning, establish connections, and strive for agency in compromised contexts.

The purpose of these stories was to explore the relationships among identity, resilience, and coping in challenging contexts, to better understand the nature of the human experience. This thesis aimed to inform academic discourse, encourage empathy, and foster awareness through storytelling, highlighting an individual's inner life strength, flexibility, and transformative potential of the human spirit in hardship (Bourgault & Rosamond, 2024). The value of storytelling is supported by the systematic literature review of West *et al.* (2022). Bietti *et al.* (2018) support the adaptive nature of storytelling in making sense of unusual situations and promoting social unity. Narratives influence empathy, particularly among vulnerable communities sharing a common identity (McBeth *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, Gómez Poyato *et al.* (2025) suggest that such narratives may be valuable educational tools for teaching ethics in a participatory and relaxed environment.

The study explored the role of resilience in people dealing with life during two phenomena, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic and drug addiction. Xu and Yang (2023) and Seaborn *et al.* (2022) emphasise that resilience is essential in coping with significant challenges. Social and individual resources that provided steadiness and stabilised changes are highlighted by Hildon *et al.* (2008). Focus on identity, flexibility, and coping mechanisms revealed a sense of agency and documented lived experiences of hope and personal growth in adversity (Wolverson *et al.*, 2015). Brown and Leigh (2018) emphasise the importance of raising awareness about silent voices, encouraging academics to create a more inclusive discourse, and addressing systemic issues.

Cognitive sciences enable the empirical study of aesthetics (Meskin *et al.*, 2018). Art, beauty, and other topics concerning the interpretation and evaluation of the nature of art are the focus of philosophical aesthetics (Thomas & Scruton, 2024). Subjective in nature, artistic research involves the development and reflection of people on their creative process (Jokela &

Huhmarniemi, 2018). As an arts-based research practice, the creative process was the focus of the study, similar to the approach of Riera-Retamero and Hernández-Hernández (2021).

There is a need for further research using an arts-based research approach to develop sustainable creative processes for self-exploration, reflection, and creative expression, offering future hope. An interdisciplinary approach helps in dealing with the unseen and in-between, suggesting an A/R/Tography perspective. Becoming an A/R/Tographer is a research methodology, a research method, and a creative practice. The researcher also being a research participant can lead to deeper insights, i.e., why art, research, and thinking and learning are essential components. From an A/R/Tography perspective, the work was framed through three roles: artist-researcher-teacher. Artists, aesthetics, and public interaction and learning can and should guide the presentation of art with an A/R/Tographic intention of expanding understanding and knowledge. The teacher's performative pedagogy is reflected through practices of the in-between. The researcher, through multiple inquiry methods, engaged in and collected data from processes that included art-making, journal writing, critical reflection through writing, and researching the work of other artists and writers, to deal with the complexities of the inquiry. A/R/Tography is concerned with creatively inventing concepts and mapping the strengths experienced in relational, branching, yet singular events. Hence, art, research, teaching (a-r-t) and learning are essential components.

## **1.2 Research orientation**

The research positioning moves from an initial state of the researcher being an artist to the desired state of artist/researcher/teacher.

The nature of this study is both interdisciplinary across art, research, and teaching and learning disciplines, and disciplinary within each respective discipline. The reason for this dual approach is to capitalise on the A/R/Tography perspective that allows for fluid, flexible and unpredictable research based on the roles of artist-researcher-teacher (Springgay *et al.*, 2005). A/R/Tography is therefore well suited to an enacted living inquiry process of art-making and writing (Springgay *et al.*, 2005). These interconnected visual and written encounters are interwoven with each other for complex meaning-making. The disciplinary approach is not intended to bring more rigour to this research study, but instead to explore the researcher's becoming more knowledgeable and proficient as a researcher by using suitable research strategies for each discipline. In this case, the living inquiry is situated in a specific context, exploring the lived experience of the target group. A/R/Tography provides the means to capture the researcher's journey as an artist becoming an artist-teacher and eventually becoming an artist-researcher-teacher based on the insights gained from the discipline-specific inquiry. The becoming process is characterised by the interdisciplinary nature of A/R/Tography, where meaning-making is not predetermined by a specific discipline or overlap

of disciplines, but instead appears in any of the circle overlaps as new enacted spaces are formed during the living inquiry process.

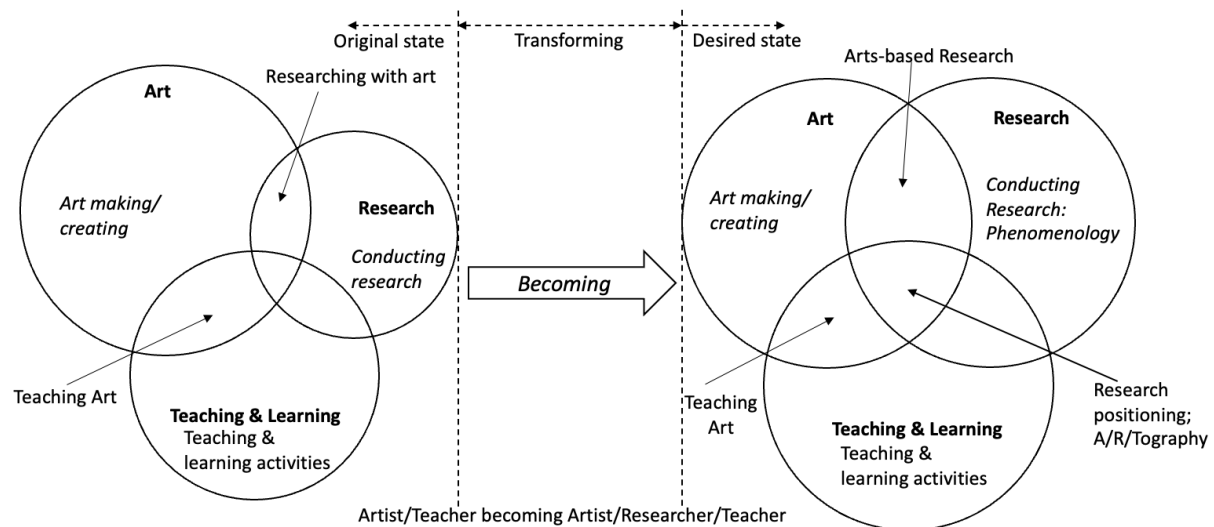


**Figure 1-1: Researcher's positioning of being to becoming**

In Figure 1.1, the positioning of the researcher and the associated identities are illustrated to reflect the shift toward becoming a competent researcher. At the outset of the study, the researcher primarily identified as an established artist, with a secondary role as an art teacher. Her identity as a researcher was still emerging, marked by limited experience and engagement within academic research contexts. The relative sizes of the circles in the figure represent the perceived significance of each role then. Over the course of the study, her identity evolved, integrating the roles of artist, educator, and researcher more holistically. Through active engagement with arts-based methods, her researcher identity was strengthened and redefined as competent, grounded in creative inquiry and reflexive practice.

This study is based on the view of Springgay *et al.* (2005) of A/R/Tography. This perspective will be discussed in more detail in sub-section 2.6 to indicate how it applies to this study, including the more recent application of A/R/Tography. They propose six interrelated renderings that can guide the A/R/Tography living inquiries, namely: contiguity (with renderings next to or touching each other); living inquiry (a living inquiry process of art-making, research, and teaching in the liminal space between these); openings (are opportunities that become visible through an open engagement process that seeks to understand the unknowing, unpredictable and below the surface of the living inquiry); metaphor/metonymy (replacing one concept with an unrelated (metaphor) or related other (metonymy) to translate word-to-word, word-to-image, or image-to-image. Both can be used together, only one, or none (represented by the “/”); reverberations (where meaning-making is a persistent process towards higher-order understanding by exploring new openings); excess (when expression is an ongoing process of becoming through the creation of new openings).

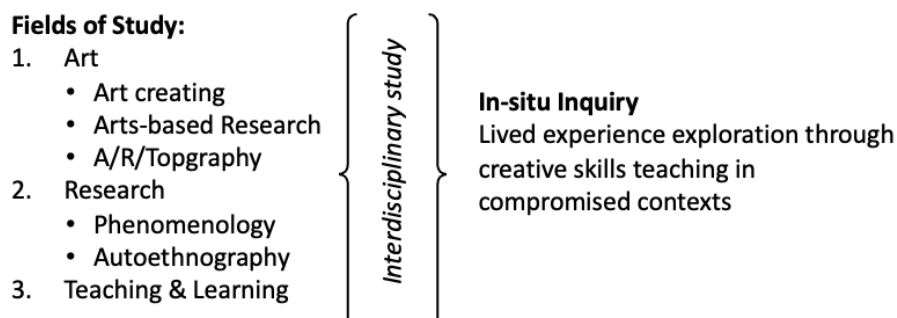


**Figure 1-2: Fields of the study**

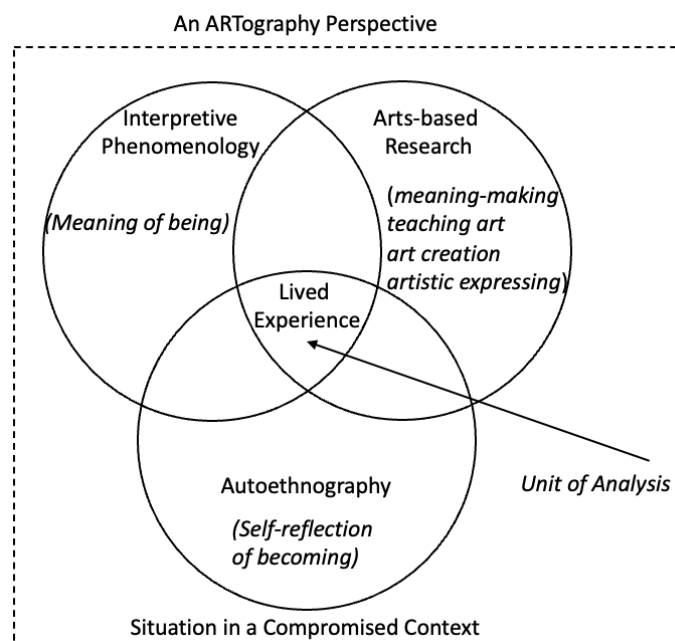


**Figure 1-3: The focus of the study**

The A/R/Topgraphy perspective focuses on the researcher's journey as a living inquiry towards becoming an artist-researcher-teacher as she explores the lived experiences of the research participants. She grounded her own experience in self-reflection as she makes sense of the participants' self-explorations as they express their insights using the art skills taught to them through creative processes. In that sense, the "A/R/Topgraphy becomes a passage to somewhere else", as Springgay *et al.* (2005) conclude their arguments. Although the research part of this study is situated, thereby recognising the influences of the environment on the lived experiences of the participants, the A/R/Topgraphy part focuses on living inquiry through several engagements.

The three roles of the researcher are:

- **Artist** – to artistically express the study, its concepts, the research, and art-making processes with data collection and analysis, and findings based on observations and reflections.

- **Researcher** – conduct situational inquiry through:
  - **Arts-based research** that enables participants to create and interpret art as they explore and reflect on their lived experiences through a creative process, gaining new creative skills along the way.
  - **Interpretive phenomenology** to understand the *in-situ* lived experiences of the participants.
  - **Autoethnography** to reflect on her own lived experiences in the artist-researcher-teacher roles when engaging with the participants in the creative spaces.
- **Teacher** – teach participants new creative skills using creative methods (knowing, doing, and making).

**Table 1-1: The CARER metaphor explained**

The acronym CARER was chosen to refer to the person within the role of artist-researcher-teacher. CARER = **C**reator • **A**rtist • **R**eflector • **E**thnographer • **R**evealer, where each letter within the word has meaning that contributes to the overall concept to reflect the intricacies and complementary nature of each role. *Creator* encapsulates the importance of creativity that in A/R/Tography spans across all three roles; *Artist* refers to the central role of being an artist first; *Reflector* alerts to the importance of reflection in all three roles; *Ethnographer* ensures that the cultural and contextual aspects relating to truth and meaning in lived experience are considered; and *Revealer* captures the essence of being an artist-teacher-researcher to uncover self-knowledge through story, art, and reflection.

An artistic expression of the metaphor CARER, as interpreted by the researcher, appears on the next page.



CREATOR

ARTIST

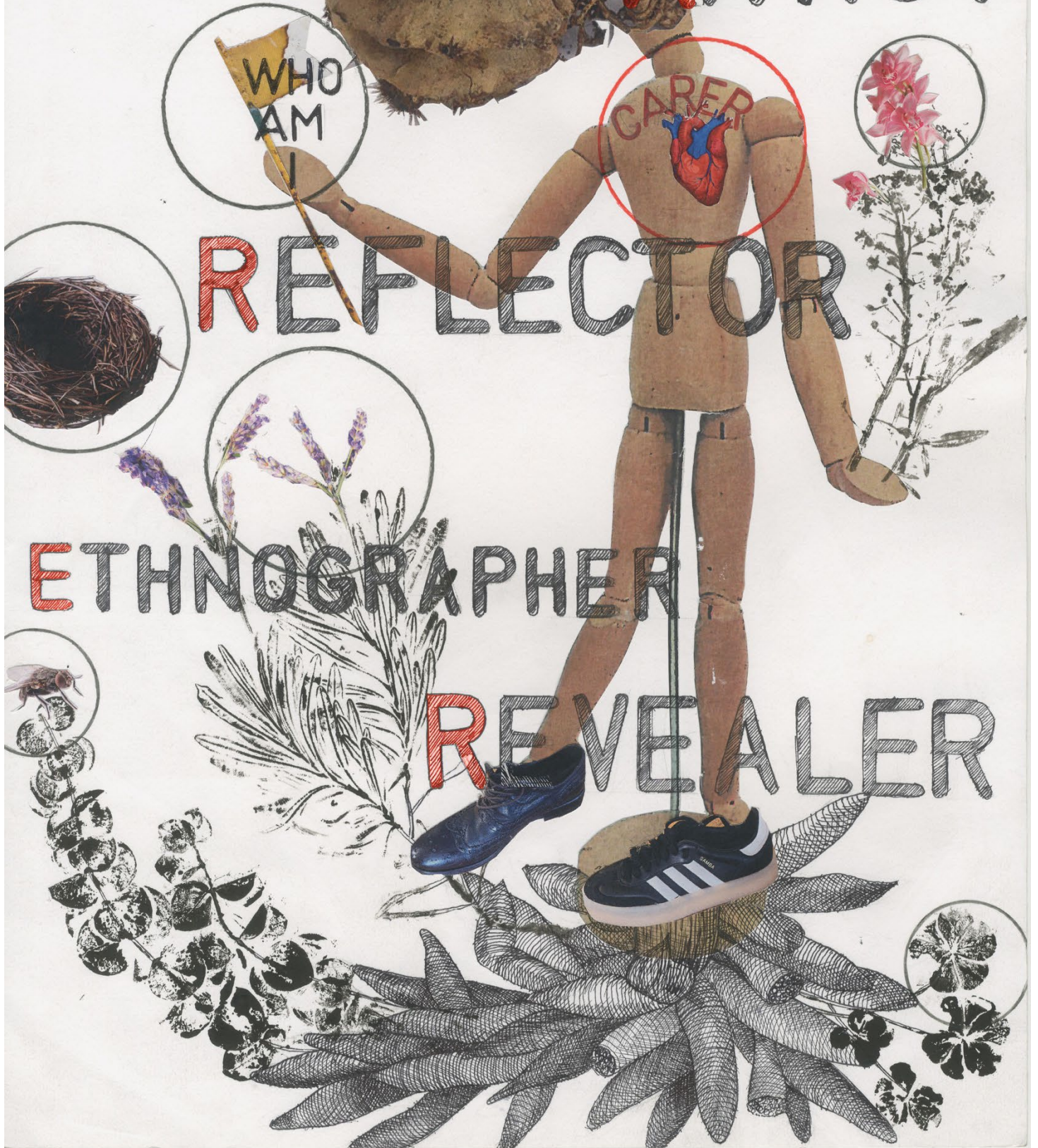
WHO  
AM  
I

CARED

REFLECTOR

ETHNOGRAPHER

REVEALER





### **1.3 Research gap identification**

Next, the gap that this study aims to address is introduced to present the current status of related literature to provide a background to the research problem. Thereafter, the problem statement that represents the identified research gap is presented.

#### **1.3.1 Research problem background**

This study focuses on the lived experiences of people within a specific context. The concept of a compromised context is used to highlight the contextual challenges that negatively impact a person's life. It is aligned with under-resourced, restricted, underdeveloped, and underserved contexts to emphasise the negative influences of the context but does not provide for situations where people who live in well-resourced contexts also experience life as difficult. Compromised context is defined and grounded in the literature in Chapter 2, sub-section 2.1.

The compromised context for this study provides a contextual frame for a situational inquiry into the lived experiences of individuals influenced by the phenomena of unemployment and drug addiction in rural areas in the Western Cape, South Africa.

The socio-economic and cultural background of young people in compromised contexts, between the ages of 15 and 24, especially in rural areas, is challenging. Statistics in 2025 showed a high rate of unemployment, currently 62.4%, an increase since 2015 when it was 50.3%. The situation is even worse in non-urban areas where the brunt of unemployment is experienced, for example, few young people in the Eastern Cape Province are employed. In the Western Cape, where this study is located, the unemployment rate is 21.1%, while the total unemployment rate in South Africa is 33.2% (Stats SA, 2025). Concerning drug addiction, the findings of Mutai *et al.* (2024), who used five nationally representative household surveys for the period 2002-2007, indicate a high increase in drug use in South Africa. They suggest the need for interventions that focus on specific population groups to address the problems that lead to drug addiction. In this study, the target groups are individuals in compromised contexts who are unemployed or who are treated for drug addiction, to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences to support evidence-based intervention design.

The Youth Development Strategy (YDS) is an initiative designed by the Western Cape Government to empower youth. The purpose of the YDS is to create more support, opportunities and services for all young people in order that they may better engage with their environment (external and internal) and successfully transition into responsible, independent, productive, healthy, and stable adults (Western Cape Government, 2013). An updated version was incorporated in the Provincial Strategic Plan 2025-2030 with additional interventions. Positive youth development is shaped holistically; it addresses where young people come from and what influences their world.

The illustration below (Figure 1.4) demonstrates how a young person can be empowered holistically. However, it is not clear what the youth development environment means from the youths' perspectives, and especially how they experience their lived realities.

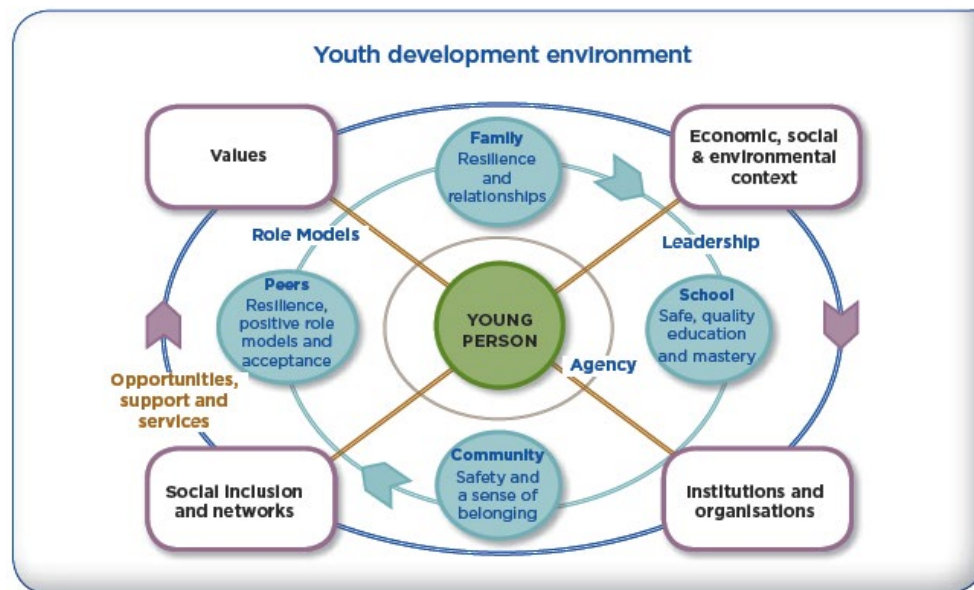


**Figure 1-4: Youth Development Strategy – Youth development environment in the Western Cape Government (2013)**

In addition to an improved understanding of individuals' lived experiences, it is also not clear how they could express the sense-making of their lived experiences through creative and non-verbal forms as part of their sense of being, relations with others, and community resilience. Traditional research on socio-economic challenges experienced by humans may not sufficiently cater to the depth, complexity, and emotional impact, where the focus is more on factors influencing the target group of a study, using, for example, surveys, interviews, etc., than on lived experience as individual sense-making (van Manen, 2023; Leavy, 2015; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018; Clandinin, 2013). Individuals may benefit from self-exploration, reflection, and expression, but may not have the skills to do so. Arts-based methods provide for the non-verbal, creative, and embodied expression of self-exploration, and although previous studies set in South Africa have linked it to the concept of lived experience (Gittings *et al.*, 2022; Clacherty & Shahrokh, 2023; Swanepoel & Conradie, 2023), the focus on individuals in rural areas seems to be under-researched through an arts-based lens. In addition, lived experience has the potential to fit into a transformational agenda, and although the scoping review of Parsell *et al.* (2024) is in the social work practice domain of studies predominantly in the UK and similar contexts, a better understanding of the target group's meaning-making needs could lead to more responsive services.



### **1.3.2 Research problem statement**

Governments, globally and locally, are initiating programmes to alleviate the pressure on the youth to fight and eradicate poverty and unemployment, but despite the many initiatives, this remains a global challenge with increasing levels of unemployment, especially in middle- to low-income countries. It is not clear how individuals' experiences of their lived realities within compromised contexts are considered in developmental initiatives. In addition, people usually find it difficult to verbally express the meaning of their complex situational life experiences. Arts-based methods may have the mechanisms to assist individuals with meaning-making of situational lived experiences but may not yet provide for the complexities of a compromised context. It is also not clear how the complementary or integrated roles of an artist-researcher-teacher could contribute to a better understanding of situational lived experiences based on relationships formed with the target group during the inquiry process.

It is not clear how meaning can be co-created between the CARER and research participants. Centring throughout the creative process, participants thought about their relationships with others and themselves in an ongoing, relational reflection process. Understanding surfaced from specific moments and circumstances through this developing observation, generating situational knowledge based on actual interaction rather than theoretical conclusions.

### **1.3.3 Research aim, objectives, and questions**

This study aims to explore the situational lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts to gain contextually grounded insights into the suitability of creative processes in enabling more meaningful self-explorations and expressions. The anticipated contributions extend traditional research paradigms to foreground creative expression as both data and dialogue. This is possible with an interdisciplinary process incorporating art that allows for dealing with the unseen and how the artist-teacher-researcher roles align with an A/R/Tography perspective.

A suitable co-participatory framework will be the expected outcome that will equip youth and substance users by better preparing them with a holistic skill set. Creating artworks and artefacts with a narrative of sustainability could contribute to training and to an empowered state. Placing the researcher alongside the participants at the centre of the study creates opportunities for reciprocal dialogue grounded in processes of self-exploration and reflection. These dialogues extend beyond the creative activities themselves, encompassing the evolving relational dynamics between the "self" and the "other" within a specific social and situational context. Such engagement fosters critical insights into self-identity and positionality, contributing to a deeper understanding of situated lived experience.

Additionally, youth at risk and substance users will be encouraged to participate as change agents in future development initiatives. During this process, the CARER will continually reflect to inform my research and practice.

### **1.3.4 Research questions (RQs) and objectives**

**RQ1:** *How do people in compromised contexts experience their lived reality in a specific situation?* This research question explores the lived experiences of the target groups to gain a better understanding of their lived realities. This research question has two research objectives:

- **First objective:** Determine the self-exploration of the participants' lived realities through their contextual engagements.
- **Second objective:** Establish meaning-making of the embodiment of the participant's lived reality.

**RQ2:** *How can the in-situ interactions between the researcher as Artist and persons during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills?* This research question explores the engagements of the researcher with the participants to establish their responses to probing their lived experiences through teaching creative processes. The focus is on the skills they learned to express their experiences and reflections through art. This research question has four research objectives:

- **First objective:** Teach participants creative methods to artistically express themselves.
- **Second objective:** Determine the interconnectedness of art and reality based on the artist's and participants' engagements during the creative process.
- **Third objective:** Observe the emergence of the participants' meaning-making through creative processes, creating artistic expressions.
- **Fourth objective:** Create artistic expressions based on the insights gained during the study.

**RQ3:** *What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts?* The focus of this research question is on the development of the researcher's and participants' ability to reflect on their lived experiences through self-exploration and expression. This research question has one objective:

- **First objective:** Reflect on the participants' self-exploration during the research journey in the roles of artist-researcher-teacher (CARER).

### 1.3.5 Research question alignment

The research questions above, with their related research objectives, key concepts, and researcher role, are presented in Table 1.2 to indicate the research alignment.

**Table 1-2: Research questions, objects, key concepts, and researcher role**

| Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Research Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Key Concept                                            | Researcher Role              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>RQ1:</b> How do people in compromised contexts experience their lived reality in a specific situation?                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the self-exploration of the participants' lived realities through their contextual engagements.</li> <li>• Establish meaning-making of the embodiment of the participant's lived reality.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Lived experience                                       | Researcher as an interpreter |
| <b>RQ2:</b> How can the <i>in situ</i> interactions between the researcher as Artist and persons during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach participants creative methods to artistically express themselves.</li> <li>• Determine the interconnectedness of art and reality based on the artist's and participants' interactions during the creative process.</li> <li>• Observe the emergence of the participants' meaning-making through creative processes, creating artistic expressions.</li> <li>• Create artistic expressions based on the insights gained during the study.</li> </ul> | Artistic expression, lived experience, creative skills | Artist, Researcher, Teacher  |
| <b>RQ3:</b> What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts?                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the participants' self-exploration during the research journey in the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher (CARER).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Reflections, Lived experience, Artistic expressions    | Artist, Researcher           |

### 1.4 Research methodology

The research methodology provides for the disciplines that inform this study, namely qualitative interpretive research to study the lived experience of the phenomenon and autoethnography based on the reflections of the researcher using an inductive approach. The second orientation is arts-based research to provide for the teaching of skills that could be used for self-exploration and expression through an abductive approach. The philosophical underpinning for the interpretive arts-based research considers the overlapping and unique ontological and epistemological stances for each.

#### **1.4.1 Philosophical underpinning**

The philosophical underpinning of the study is based on an ontological stance of subjectivism. It considers the reality of the participants as their sense-making of their lived reality, which is socially constructed. There are, therefore, many truths that depend on the construction of knowledge as a social construct, including the researcher's meaning-making of the interpretations. The researcher, being part of the study, gains insights through a subjectivist lens, interpreting the empirical data and findings of the study. This is typical of a social science study where human behaviour is the focus of the study. Where human behaviour is being explored and understood, the researcher has an important subjective role to gain meaningful insights that cannot be disconnected from a particular context, situation, or practice. Knowledge emerges from interactions, conversations, and dialogues, both consciously and unconsciously (Hashem, 2023).

The art component of the study is also underpinned by a subjectivist stance where the artistic expressions, both word and visual, are created through artistic processes to explore and understand lived experience as a concept. Although there are similarities between research and art practices, there are also significant differences. MacDonald and Moss (2015) use the metaphor of a border, also a type of liminal space, to explain the practices on either side, but also how they traverse into a common space that represents the border. They also refer to the term "becoming" as a way to realise the nexus between art and research practices. They further unpack the approach for creating art and conducting research, as perceived parallels and tensions are encountered between the two approaches.

McNiff (2008) and Leavy (2015; 2018), indicate that arts-based research (ABR) is a rigorous method of yielding information that questions established epistemic hierarchies. Leavy (2015) presents ABR as a transdisciplinary methodology that combines theory and practice to generate ethically engaged and socially responsive knowledge (Leavy, 2015; 2018), McNiff observes creative and embodied practice as the research process itself (McNiff, 2008; 2013). While Barone accentuates meaning-making through aesthetic and interpretive forms (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Together, these viewpoints present ABR as an interpretive and emergent style of inquiry that develops the notion and communication of research.

Based on their views, the authors suggest that art and research practices can both enrich and inhibit each other. This nexus between art and research practices as a border can also be regarded as an "in-between" space of transition, i.e., a liminal space. While Sunarto (2023) refers to the nature of the pillars of existence in art research and art creation. Whereas art research aims to find the truth in human values and thoughts, art creation aims to reveal values through a creative process. He refers to values as truth, in terms of reality; goodness as a

moral measure; and beauty to give perceptual satisfaction. In art research, the aim is to find one element of value, whereas art creation uncovers all the possibilities of value.

Art is created, inspired by the artist's ideas, values, feelings, aspirations and reactions. Similar to social sciences research, arts-based research also aims to systematically collect knowledge about how humans make sense of situations. Art creation, on the other hand, uses creative forms for the artist to express what they want to reveal or expose about selected values through a deep interpretation and appreciation of the art process. He suggests that artwork is the container to represent the essence of thinking about human values presented as thoughts or feelings of a lived experience (ibid). In research, true knowledge is created through a systematic process, situated living inquiry as living practice of art-making, research, and teaching (Springgay *et al.*, 2005). They further base their view of the process of meaning-making and being on Rose's (2007) argument that these are inextricably connected to an awareness and understanding of art.

Associated with an interpretive approach are inductive processes considering multiple factors simultaneously, shaped based on a specific context. From the inquiry, patterns are developed to gain insights into the phenomenon investigated (Creswell, 2003; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Creative practice can be regarded as a means to create new knowledge through an inquiry process (Niedderer & Roworth-Stokes, 2007). However, creativity is based on existing significant knowledge and creative activities that rely on tacit knowledge to give work a recognisable shape and form (Edmonds & Candy, 2002; Gerber *et al.*, 2018). Artwork can be the artistic expression of the lived experience that is created and recreated through an artistic experience to nurture insight and attach meaning (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). It is therefore an alternative inquiry method to something that may be otherwise inaccessible.

The ontological stance of this study considers the context and how the persons make sense of their lived world and is therefore based on a subjectivist stance (ontology *in-situ*). This study is epistemologically situated within the interpretive paradigm, as the study makes meaning of my experiences with NEET youth and substance users and how they make sense of engaging with the creative processes within compromised contexts. It considers multiple realities that are socially constructed to represent the meaning-making of the researcher and participants of how they experience their lived situation and their participation in the creative process sessions. In summary, the study assumes an ontological stance of idealism with many truths, where reality is both a social construction and a projection of human imagination through the creative process (Collis & Hussey, 2003:51). They view facts as dependent on the observer as they socially construct meaning from their observations and derived findings. I will gain

insights based on how the NEET participants attach meaning to their lived experiences through their involvement in the co-creation processes.

In the creativity section it is linked to art. The philosophical underpinning of this study is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.2.

#### **1.4.2 Research strategies choice**

This study is situated in a compromised context where individuals' lived experiences are investigated as these are influenced by the phenomena of unemployment and substance abuse. An A/R/Tography perspective is used to guide the inquiry together with the following three research strategies to gain deeper insights, namely: interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), arts-based research, and autoethnography.

Utilising phenomenology, more specifically, IPA, as detailed in Chapter 3, the research aimed to: (i) understand the essence of individuals' lived experiences, focusing on their perceptions, emotions, and the meanings they attributed to their situations; (ii) observed how compromised contexts shaped individuals and their collective identities, in my view along with innovative creative strategies was necessitated to cope; (iii) investigate the effects of these contexts on social relationships, family structures, and community ties, highlighting the importance of these aspects (Campbell & Mannell, 2015); (iv) analyse the role of storytelling in shaping narratives of lived experiences, and how individuals asserted their agency (Dugnoille, 2022); (v) explore the connection of social categories to understand the complex experiences of those in compromised contexts and to consider the ethical challenges of conducting research in such environments (Martin *et al.*, 2021); (vi) discuss the findings' potential implications for social interventions or innovative community initiatives towards an empowered state, as crucial to a thorough analysis of the lived experiences in compromised contexts (Schloemer & Schröder-Bäck, 2018).

IPA was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences, making it ideal for understanding how NEET youth and substance users make sense of their situations by applying creative processes. It helps interpret the meaning of personal experiences in context (Campbell & Mannell, 2015).

Arts-based research (ABR) was selected as it enables the creation of new knowledge through creative expression, providing participants with a platform to express emotions and values that may not be easily verbalised. This method supports the exploration of personal meaning-making and can enrich understanding of lived experiences (Dugnoille, 2022).

Autoethnography (AE) was chosen because it allows researchers to reflect on their own situational experiences within the research process, offering a deeper, more subjective understanding of the study's context (Martin *et al.*, 2021). It also fosters a connection between

the researcher's personal insights and the participants' experiences, enhancing the research's overall interpretive quality (Schloemer & Schröder-Bäck, 2018).

Combining these concepts required appropriate methodologies and theoretical frameworks aligned with the research objectives and provided a holistic understanding of lived experiences in compromised contexts. (See Chapter 3.)

Together, these strategies provided a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach to answering the research questions, allowing for a deep, empathetic understanding of the participants' experiences while acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity in the process.

### **1.5 Proposed creative methods**

The combination of printmaking and body mapping with an A/R/Tography perspective could be an effective strategy for my CARER roles, enhancing my artistic practice, deepening my engagement with research, and improving pedagogical approaches, in line with the findings of Lopes and Machado (2023). Blending these creative processes could foster new avenues for self-expression, inquiry, and innovation in education, contributing to a diverse journey in art, academia, and creative exploration, as noted by Samanieco *et al.* (2021). The significance of body mapping and teaching creative techniques was accentuated during the data collection stage, similar to the suggestions of Heinrichs (2021).

Printmaking encompasses various techniques, such as relief printing, intaglio, lithography, screen printing, linocut, and collagraph techniques. Body mapping served as a means for artistic expression using the human body, integrating personal stories into visual art. The application of linocut and collagraph printing techniques in this study produced tactile and visually engaging art (Klein *et al.*, 2019; Lys *et al.*, 2018).

### **1.6 Data collection**

Qualitative data were collected through reflections and artistic expressions within an *in situ* living inquiry. Different data collection methods were used as part of the qualitative multi-method design as the methodological choice. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.7. A summary table to indicate the alignment of the data collection methods to the research questions and data sources is presented next.

**Table 1-3: Research alignment with research strategies, methods, and data sources**

| Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Research objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Key Concept                                            | Researcher Role            | Strategy                                  | Methods                                                                       | Data Source                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RQ1:</b> How do NEET persons, who find it difficult to sustain a living in a complex context, experience their lived reality/situation?                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the self-exploration of participants lived realities through their contextual engagements</li> <li>Establish meaning-making of the embodiment of the participant' lived reality</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Lived experience                                       | Researcher                 | Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) | Literature review, Observations, Body mapping                                 | Reflection Diaries, Body Maps                                     |
| <b>RQ2:</b> How can the in-situ interactions between the researcher as ARTist and NEET persons during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach participants creative methods to artistically express themselves</li> <li>Determine the interconnectedness of art and reality based on the ARTist and participants' interactions during the creative process</li> <li>Observe the emergence of the participants' meaning-making through creative processes, creating artistic expressions</li> <li>Create artistic expressions based on the insights gained during the study</li> </ul> | Artistic expression, lived experience, creative skills | Artist, Researcher Teacher | Arts-Based Research (ABR)                 | Literature review, Art-making teaching with creative methods (PM, ED, BB, BM) | Creative process participation observations, Artistic expressions |
| <b>RQ3:</b> What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in complex contexts?                                                                                                                    | Reflect on the self-exploration during the research journey in the roles of artist, researcher and teacher during the study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Reflections, Lived experience, Artistic expressions    | Artist, Researcher         | Auto-ethnography (AE)                     | Observations (creative process, participation)                                | Reflection Diaries, Reflection journal, Observation               |

### 1.6.1 Data collection tools and techniques

A narrative literature review strategy was used to establish the current status of the concepts adopted by this study. Related literature of the different disciplines that inform this study was identified and incorporated into structuring the theoretical conceptual basis to guide the study.

Continuous reflection based on observations of the creative activities and engagements during the research period allowed the researcher to gain the necessary insights into the lived experiences of the participants, as well as to reflect on her own experience of becoming an arts-based researcher teaching creative processes. In addition, the participants were encouraged to reflect in their reflection journals.

Body mapping emerged as a valuable method to facilitate and guide participants in expressing their lived experiences within a safe and supportive space. Complementary creative processes, including printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, and bookbinding, were introduced to encourage participants to explore their creativity through the production of artworks. These artistic expressions generated rich qualitative data, offering meaningful insights into the participants' individual lived realities.

Aligning body mapping with printmaking created powerful artworks that captured the complexities of human life, especially in specific socio-cultural settings (Skop, 2016; Mayra, 2022; Klein & Milner, 2019; Lambert *et al.*, 2021; Mayra, 2022). Body mapping also aspires to represent sensory and bodily experiences through visual narratives, supporting participant-led depiction in research (Sabbagh *et al.*, 2024) and originating from efforts in community



development, enabling participants to work towards an empowered state (Kruahong *et al.*, 2023).

Data were collected and analysed for the two cases to generate two datasets, where each set contained the data for the particular data collection methods used. The third dataset contains the results of the autoethnographic study that was also coded to create themes.

### **1.6.2 Recruitment and sampling**

The target population for this study comprised persons whose sense of safety is influenced by a specific phenomenon. The following selection criteria were considered for both groups: they must live in the same geographical area to be influenced by similar contextual factors for the *in situ* living inquiry. This provides an opportunity for the study to consider the contextual factors that typically influence the lived experience of persons in the same situation.

Race and gender were not considered because the study aims to consider human lived experiences regardless of race or gender.

The phenomenon for the first target group is unemployment, as experienced by youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET); the age range for the unemployed youth was between 18 and 35 to ensure that the participants were legally able to give informed consent.

The phenomenon for the second target group is substance dependency, with the participants in a rehabilitation facility for drug addiction. Most of the participants were also unemployed due to their addiction to drugs.

Recruitment was done by the respective participating organisations to support non-probabilistic, purposive, and convenience sampling. The sampling strategy provided for target-phenomenon-rich participants to form the basis of an initial understanding. Even though sampling bias is possible, the aim of the study is not to generalise the findings.

## **1.7 Data analysis**

The data types for this study are qualitative, mostly narratives, and visual. The comprised interpretation of themes derived from the qualitative text data and the visual analysis of the artworks created as artistic expressions.

### **1.7.1 Thematic analysis**

A thematic process was used to inductively code the data, after which the codes were grouped and categorised based on similarities and shared meanings to derive sub-themes that were then grouped into themes. This resulted in a list of themes for each data collection method for both cases. One or more findings were derived for each theme. The same was done for the autoethnography data based on the reflexive research journal of the CARER. The next step was to consider the naming of the themes and to standardise these across each dataset. The

data collection and analysis for the two cases are described in Chapter 5. Excerpts of the datasets with the codes, sub-themes, and themes are included as evidence of the analysis. The themes of the three datasets were then combined into a combined dataset. In Chapter 6, the combined themes are discussed to derive meaning through an interpretation process. The insights gained were then compared with what is already known, as reported in the related literature.

In the next figure, a schematic representation of the datasets and themes illustrates the analysis process.

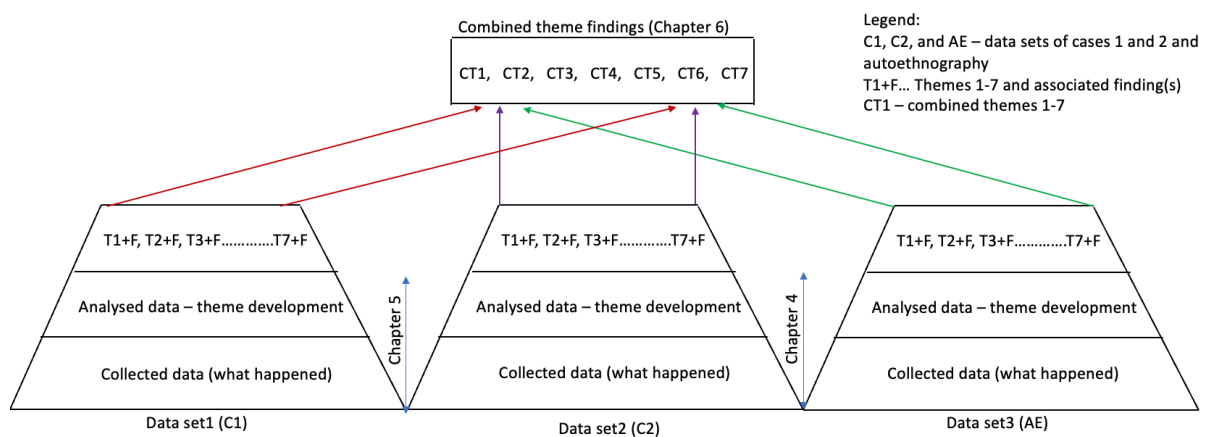


**Figure 1-5: The data analysis is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.10.**

### 1.7.2 Unit of analysis and observation

The unit of analysis is the lived experience of the participants' lived reality influenced by the phenomenon. The unit of observation is the participants' and researcher's reflections and artistic expressions of their respective lived experiences.

### 1.7.3 Interpretations and expressions

In my research, visual data analysis explored the image composition in body maps, focusing on location and relationships. Semiotics aided the interpretation of symbols, meanings, and metaphors, while discourse analysis explored how knowledge shaped understanding (Rose, 2012, cited in McCorquodale & DeLuca, 2020:17).

Intuition, with its mysterious nature in creative processes, involves reflection and analysis, which ensure methodological relevance (Watson, 2020:69). Following Gillian Rose's principles (cited in Gastaldo *et al.*, 2012:18), visual analysis was critically reflexive, considering the image, its creation, and its audience. This approach aligned with Rose's visual methodology, even if its application was unspoken.

The analysis for each research strategy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.10.

## **1.8 Ethics**

Ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process of which researchers should constantly be conscious (Orb & Eisenhauer, 2000:96). The ethical considerations for this study are based on typical ethics principles associated with interpretive research. In addition, ethics relevant to arts-based research are also considered, and to account for the compromised context, the ethics associated with participatory community-based research, creative processes, autoethnography, and research during the pandemic are also considered.

The ethical considerations for this study are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, sub-section 3.6.

## **1.9 Research quality**

The quality of the research was assessed according to the criteria for each research strategy. The validity and quality assessment of the interpretive phenomenological strategy was based on the suggestions of Nizza *et al.* (2021), Goldman (2006), and Shinebourne (2011). The recruitment and participation of the target group were considered, as well as the suitability of the data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

The evaluation of the ABR processes was undertaken to determine the impact on the target group. Gerber *et al.* (2020) suggest the Guiding ABR Assessment (GABRA) meta-framework, developed by Lafrenière and Cox (2013), as suitable for evaluating ABR. This framework includes the normative, substantive, and performative criteria.

The quality of autoethnography studies may be difficult to assess since the context, purpose, and nature of the studies may differ. Sparkes (2021) suggests that quality criteria should be identified before and during the inquiry and writing stages of the autoethnography study. Providing evidence to support the researcher's critical personal reflections about their role in the study, relationships with others, and co-creation of knowledge allows the reader to connect with the experience and to acknowledge possible new knowledge. Autoethnography is a social sciences methodology and therefore could also contribute methodological insights (Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

## **1.10 Assumptions and delineation**

This study is limited to two cases: NEET youth and substance users in a rural town within compromised contexts in the Western Cape Province. The aim of the study was not to generalise the findings. In addition, the participants were continuously reminded that the skills they were taught would not guarantee a job to manage their expectations.

### **1.11 Expected outcomes and contributions**

The study contributes to both theory and practice, deepening the understanding of visual methodologies in social research and providing practical insights for real-world challenges. Theoretically, it develops dialogues on A/R/Tography, arts-based research, and visual reflexivity, focusing on individuals' lived experiences to gain a deeper understanding of their sense-making of their circumstances in compromised contexts. Practically, it helps shape creative, sustainable interventions and support systems for NEET youth during the pandemic and substance users, showing how creative methods initiate change in complex social settings. Placing the researcher at the centre of the study, together with the participants, allowed for a better understanding of the relationships formed during the study that resulted in co-created meaning-making.

The contributions of this study are considered as theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. These contributions are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, sub-section 7.5.

## 1.12 Layout of the thesis

Chapter 1  
Research Orientation



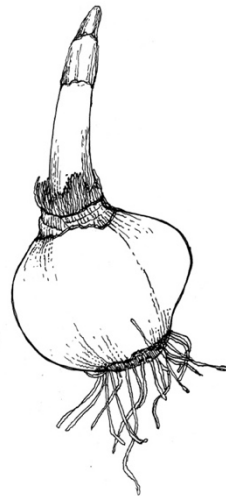
Chapter 2  
Literature Review



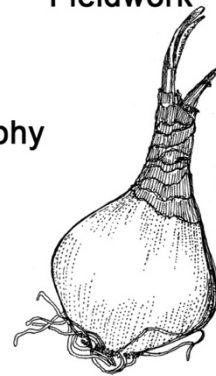
Chapter 3  
Research Methods



Chapter 4  
Autoethnography



Chapter 5  
Fieldwork



Chapter 6  
Discussion



Chapter 7  
Conclusion and  
Further Research



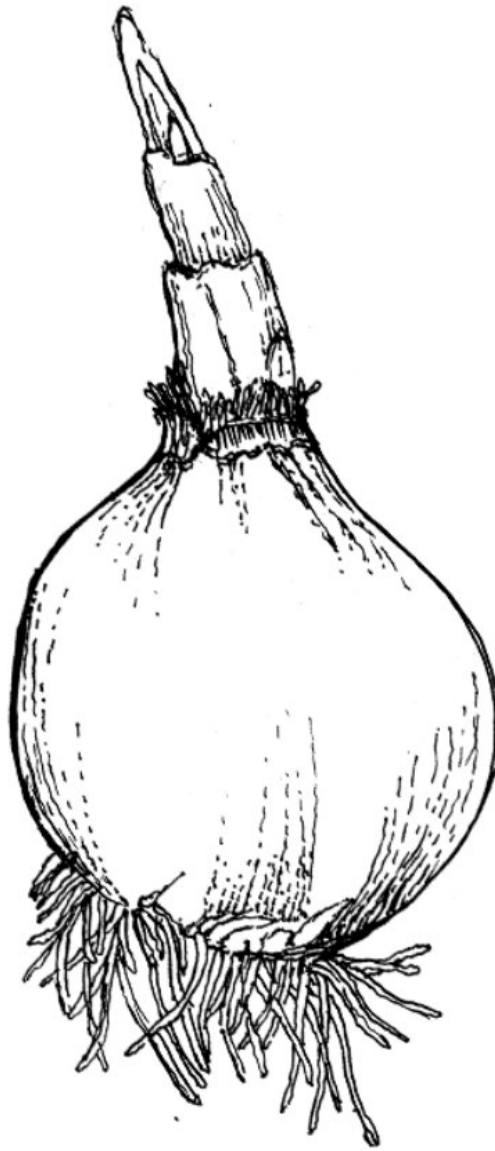
### **1.13 Chapter conclusion**

In conclusion, the study presented an overview of the chapter layout. The research engaged arts-based methods and A/R/Tography to strengthen the expression of underserved individuals (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; LeBlanc & Irwin, 2019). Exploring the lived experiences of individuals in compromised contexts involved considering various contextual factors contributing to their situation, with their well-being and economic challenges being particularly significant (Pfadenhauer *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of applying creative interventions as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill, which literature indicates prepares students and vulnerable communities alike for future success (Alismail & McGuire, 2015:54).

The research orientation indicates the disciplines that inform the situational inquiry and presents the researcher's identity shift from an artist to a researcher. The situational inquiry requires the details of the context to establish the influences that the participants experience associated with unemployment and drug abuse.

Next, the research gap was identified to clarify the problem that the research aims to address. The research aim provides the basis for the research questions to guide the data collection and analysis. The research methodology is aligned with the purpose of the study, which aims to understand the lived experiences in compromised contexts. The methods for the data collection and analysis are explained to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Ethics applicable to the study, the proposed research quality assessment, and expected outcomes and contributions conclude the chapter.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW



## 2.1 Introduction

In this thesis, the lived experiences of persons are explored through creative skills development among unemployed people, youth at risk (aged between 18 and 30), and people with substance dependency (aged between 20 and 50), in the Western Cape province in South Africa. I am specifically focusing on creative methods, for example printmaking, as a skill and the outcome of the print as an artwork.



The literature review provided information on the concepts used in the study and their relationships as represented in related literature to provide the conceptual basis to ground the study. The different databases with relevant literature, such as Emerald, SAGE Methods, Google Scholar, etc., were researched using keywords to focus the search process. When a publication seemed relevant, its quality was considered to ensure that it resulted from a peer-reviewed process and was published in reputable publications. The purpose of the search was to establish the status in the body of related knowledge to form the theoretical basis for the study and to consider suitable approaches, methods, and theories. The literature used a forward and backward search strategy according to the following sub-steps: backward references search; backward author's search; previously used keywords; references of references; and forward references search (Levy & Ellis, 2006).

To conclude the literature review, VOSviewer was utilised as an information retrieval tool to advocate for the significance of creative processes, methods, and arts-based research. This tool was employed to extract insights into the structure and dynamics of scientific fields, identify influential authors or papers, and explore emerging trends. Its versatility highlighted it as an asset for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of research landscapes.



The following concepts are discussed in the chapter: context considerations; NEET persons and substance users as the research participants; the concept of lived experience; A/R/Tography; creative processes; and the roles of artist-researcher-teacher.

## **2.2 Contextual considerations for the study**

Considering context for this study is important because the study focuses on people's lived experiences in specific situations. The situational inquiry, therefore, considers the contextual factors as these influence the lived experiences of the participants.

### **2.2.1 Compromised contexts**

Context is considered "*the totality of circumstances that comprise the milieu of human life and human functioning*" (Shogren *et al.*, 2014:110). They base their view of the context concept on the following assumptions: that human functioning is influenced by its context as expressed with personal and environmental characteristics; as understood by the individual; that it is observable and measurable; contextual aspects can be used to increase human functioning; and that the context of human functioning is influenced by the meso (organisational/community), and macro levels.

Based on the systematic literature review analysing qualitative interview studies considering the contextual factors influencing the experience of unemployed individuals, they indicate that three contextual levels are applicable, namely the individual, community, and broader society (Du Toit *et al.*, 2018). This means that the lived realities of individuals are influenced by the individuals' experiences; their community for their relations, behaviour, values, and the environment; and the broader society for the structural and cultural influences.

Unlike an underserved context where the lack of services could lead to poverty and other social ills, a compromised context does not relate to a lack of services or resources and can, in fact, be a well-resourced environment. In such cases, the people may still suffer due to some social ill. In this instance, one can refer to such contexts as being characterised by severe uncertainty that could negatively impact one's wellbeing (LeNoble *et al.*, 2023).

They considered the effect of the pandemic on the well-being of employees, drawing from the generalised unsafety theory of stress (GUTS) proposed by Brosschot *et al.* (2018). The GUTS is based on the premise that stressors, seen as negative life events, influence the lived experience of individuals and are then perceived by them as a sense of generalised unsafety resulting in them disengaging with others and their social environments. This prolonged stress response may then be the result of being "within" a situation without necessarily responding to a specific stressor.

Individuals are situated in different social safety circles, e.g., individual, family, community or neighbourhood, country and global. Each circle may have social factors that influence the safety of the individual (Slavich *et al.*, 2023). In the case of substance use disorders, one can refer to social vulnerability where individuals are influenced by multifaceted social factors across different levels that cause ill health to eventually lead to health disparities (Amaro *et al.*, 2021). Social stressors refer to factors that influence an individual's lived experience based on their social connections or interpersonal contexts in social-environment situations (Slavic *et al.*, 2023).

In this study, a compromised context is regarded as an environment where people are influenced by negative stressors such as life events, that, over time can lead to a prolonged sense of unsafety leaving them emotionally exhausted (Brosscot *et al.*, 2018; LeNoble *et al.*, 2023).

### **2.2.2 Unemployment and NEET persons**

South Africa's unemployment rate has continued to rise since the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth unemployment in South Africa has reached critical proportions: it was measured at 53.6% in 2013, and in 2014, youth comprised 41.8% of the total national unemployment rate (Mmesi, 2015). It is important to consider the skills needed by the target groups to contribute towards the improvement of their well-being through self-development. Unemployment in South Africa has drastically increased post COVID-19, which makes the study even more urgent.

A NEET person is not employed and not currently in education or training. Such a person may have the necessary skills, education, and training to earn a living, but for some reason is unable to sustain their living through employment. The unemployment rate for NEET youth in South Africa for the first quarter of 2023 for 15–24 years, is 62,2% (approximately, 3,7 million people), and 40,7% for NEET youth aged 25–34 (Stats SA, 2025). This situation is contradictory to the Sustainable Development Goal 8.6, that refers to full and productive employment and decent work for all. In fact, the situation of NEET youth has deteriorated in sub-Saharan Africa that includes South Africa (Cieřlik *et al.*, 2022). There could be a link between youth unemployment and youth demographics, in addition to a link between educational level and work status, that indicate that more needs to be done to address unemployment (Nkhumeleni *et al.*, 2022).



**Figure 2-1: Author's construct: Portraiture examples of NEET youth, 2018**

Labour market intervention programmes need to consider psychosocial aspects for NEET youth to help them cope with unemployment (Paver *et al.*, 2019). They also found that NEET youth in underserved communities may not know about such interventions that could benefit them. The reason for this could be that the labour market for youth is complex and requires a comprehensive, multidimensional approach, and for that reason, Mudiriza *et al.* (2023) developed a youth labour market index (YLMI) that showed very low readings for all the provinces in South Africa. Their findings indicate that the labour market for youth is highly dysfunctional.

To alleviate the growing unemployment rate, the government formed initiatives such as the government's Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), launched in 2004, which contributed to short- to medium-term labour absorption to generate income for poor households. However, the initiatives have proved they cannot adequately address youth unemployment (Sibanda, 2021).

Youth involvement in entrepreneurship supports them to boost their confidence and achieve economic independence. Within the framework of potential efforts and strategies used to boost employment and job creation for young people, entrepreneurship is increasingly accepted as an important means and a valuable additional strategy to create jobs and improve the livelihoods and economic independence of young people (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010:1; Dawari *et al.*, 2022).

An encouraging government policy in this regard is the Youth Enterprise Development Strategy (YEDS); a programme launched in November 2013 by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to encourage youth to start a self-employed venture that could lead to them owning and managing a small enterprise (Mmesi, 2015). Governments on different levels are initiating programmes, i.e., Youth Employment Service (YES), Youth Development Strategy (YDS), Vision 2030 set out by the South African National Development Plan (NDP), and the Human Development Report Office, to alleviate pressure on youth and to fight and eradicate poverty and unemployment. Interventions intended to increase employability may contribute

to addressing the needs of NEET youth, but when low literacy is associated with being unemployed, then activating labour market policies may have less impact (Van Vugt *et al.*, 2022). However, it remains a global challenge with increasing levels of unemployment, especially in middle to low-income countries (Pal *et al.*, 2024).

Although the government implemented several developmental initiatives, for example, in the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and, more specifically, targeting the youth with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and YEDS), these did not really address unemployment (Mosala, 2022, Odongo & Kyei, 2018; Wakefield & Swanepoel 2022).

In a scoping review of identified publications, Rahmani and Groot (2023) found that the factors mostly contributing to the unemployment of NEET youth are related to education and family situation. They also found that addiction is a significant factor that may lead to unemployment, but the increase in addiction could also be the result of being unemployed. Mseleku (2021) suggests that policymakers need to consider alternative solutions to address youth unemployment.

Unemployment is not only a problem for people with basic skills; new graduates from universities also experience difficulties in finding employment. It is essential in this global economy for the training of unemployed graduates to be more well-rounded, have sound collaborative skills, think creatively, analytically, and practically (Vanada, 2013) and art education can improve critical and creative thinking (Lukaka, 2023). Vanada is of the opinion that a balance of these skills and characteristics is essential for change makers and problem solvers to become capable of responding instinctively to complex problems.

Over time, unemployed youth experience an increasing sense of hopelessness and disenchantment as indicated by van Lill and Bakker (2020) in their study involving unemployed youth in South Africa. It is also important to consider non-economic indicators when designing interventions, such as the Youth Employability programme (YEP) in South Africa, to address unemployment when considering the transition into employment (Patel *et al.*, 2020).

Wiek *et al.*, (2011) indicate that it is not clear how such initiatives focus on the relevant skill set required to sustain a living in a complex context. As a result, the current skill set of the youth, and especially the NEET youth skills proposed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seem to be inadequate. While Sun and Hui (2012) suspect that there appears to be limited research on how creative processes could develop the capabilities of youth in addition to having a focus on specific skills set needed to function in a complex context to sustain a living.

It is not clear how such initiatives focus on the relevant skill set required to sustain a living in a compromised context. As a result, the current skill set of the youth, and especially the current NEET youth skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seems to be inadequate.

## **2.3 Skills development**

It is clear from the above that having appropriate skills now, but also in future, could increase the chance of finding employment. In this sub-section, the skills anticipated to be needed in future are considered, specifically focusing on being creative.

### **2.3.1 Skills for the future**

Future skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century require better prepared persons to ensure that they are capable of confronting the challenges of a global society, the ability to be creative and innovative to solve complex problems, and being equipped to use technology to advance and positively change the world for the better (Alismail & McQuire, 2015).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century, unlike any other period in human history (Boholano, 2017), is frequently considered an era of technological explosion, becoming an essential part of our daily lives (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). As a result of the progression of technology, digital literacies have become essential for everyone in this information age (Chu *et al.*, 2021).

Technologies are constantly emerging, even though there are enough existing applications to utilise. YouTube, Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok are a few social media technologies that have emerged. These applications were initially not developed for learning purposes because they were intended for recreational purposes (Boholano, 2017). According to Raja and Nagasubramani (2018), modern technologies demand suitable skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in all facets of our lives and should be included in teaching and skills development programmes (Boholano, 2017; Dodokh & Al-Ma'aitah, 2019). The use of social network sites by people has changed focus, considering the COVID-19 pandemic, where restrictions limited people's movements and they had to rely on building online communities with others. In a fast-changing knowledge economy, it is common knowledge that 21<sup>st</sup>-century digital skills drive organisations' competitiveness and innovation capacity (Ahmed, 2020).

Research indicates that social media is reshaping traditional boundaries between formal and informal learning (Greenhow & Lewin, 2015; Norhailawati *et al.*, 2019). There are advantages to the use of social media in the sharing of knowledge and information among different groups of people, since it also promotes communication skills among people (Baruah, 2012).

Youth are using social media, especially Facebook, to build relationships, connect with the world, share and gain knowledge, build stronger personalities, and have better social lives (Jan *et al.*, 2017). The use of social media as a means to stimulate creativity and critical thinking within individuals still needs to be better understood, as well as its ability to enable

communication and collaboration amongst groups (Ansari & Khan, 2020; Rinki & Wulandari, 2024; Thornhill-Miller *et al.*, 2023).

Figure 2.2, shows the top five most important skills to be employable globally (QS Intelligence Unit, 2018).

**Figure 2-2: QS Global Employer Survey: (Source: QS Intelligence Unit, 2018)**

### **2.3.2 Twenty-first century skills versus design thinking skills**

Based on a survey to determine industry's views and needs, Bialik and Fadel (2015) conclude that there seems to be consensus that creativity, creative thinking, communication, and collaboration are vital skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Continuing from their work, Romero *et al.* (2015) indicate that using skills related to the ability to behave effectively and engage certain attitudes and knowledge in action-oriented situations, enhances learning. This is also defined as skills that make it possible to do something in an effective manner" (Romero *et al.*, 2015; Bialik & Fadel, 2015).

Vanada (2013) is of the view that the implementation of art and design education may foster a balanced, interdisciplinary, 21<sup>st</sup> century future skill set. The four Cs associated with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are creativity and critical thinking for an individual perspective, and collaboration and communication for a social and interpersonal perspective (Thornhill-Miller *et al.*, 2024). They argue that the interrelatedness of these skills present teaching challenges. Visual art could stimulate a person's abilities to think and act creatively, critically, and practically. In order to build people's' conceptual artistic practice, creativity, criticality, and social-emotional practicality, a need exists for developing their thinking about ideas with social significance (Vanada, 2013). Research and industry advocate for the application of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in curriculum and training, which is significant in preparing learners with the essential skills that will help them satisfy their desire to be successful in the future (Alismail & McGuire, 2015)

In literature, the prevailing findings in research indicate that creative individuals possess divergent thinking abilities, including idea production, fluency, flexibility, and originality (Bialik & Fadel, 2015). Together, art and design education have a unique role in preparing the kinds of innovative, balanced, synthetic creators and thinkers needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by adopting new paradigms of teaching and learning (Vanada, 2013).

Already in 1978, Argyris and Schön state that learners will gain better insights if they are introduced to real-world problems together with embedding skills within knowledge domains, which can enhance deep understanding (LeCun *et al.*, 2015). Continuing from their work, Romero *et al.* (2015) indicate that using skills related to the ability to behave effectively and engage certain attitudes and knowledge in action-oriented situations enhances learning. This is also defined as skills that make it possible to do something effectively (Romero *et al.*, 2015 & Balik & Fadel, 2015).

There is a need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for art and design education to adopt new paradigms of teaching and learning (Vanada, 2015) to develop creative thinking alongside problem-solving competencies.

### **2.3.3 Tacit knowledge and beyond professional skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Tacit means 'hidden' (Wong & Radcliffe, 2000). Burbules (2008) states that tacit knowledge is the knowledge hidden from the consciousness of the knower that has not been exposed before. It resides in the human brain and cannot be easily captured or gathered. He further emphasises that tacit knowledge is often taken for granted and expresses itself through the human actions of an individual.

This means that tacit knowledge can be observed through action. Tacit knowledge has been characterised as follows: personal, difficult to articulate fully, experience based, contextualised, job specific, held within, both known and unknown to the holder, transferred through conversation and narrative, and capable of becoming explicit knowledge and vice versa (Gourlay, 2002). It can also be regarded as knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action to differentiate between knowing and practices (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2013). They suggest that revisions related to materials and tools in a specific context need to be considered during an artistic process when planning and visualising the artwork.

'Practical intelligence, for instance common sense, can be observed as capacities that allow us to navigate the choices and activities of everyday life and is similar to tacit knowledge (Burbules, 2008:669). Similarly, to the knowledge that resides in your brain, common sense is difficult to identify, and it is also difficult to ascertain exactly how or when this tacit knowledge is learned.

Tacit knowledge can be of great value to a research study even though it is difficult and sometimes impossible to capture (Olomolaiye & Egbu, 2005). Tacit and common sense can, over time, boost the potential of community participation and their utilisation of creative skills to solve problems, and can be used to assess their capabilities (Bettiol & Sedita, 2011). In this study, the participants were exposed to creative skills during the creative workshops and, by

guiding them to reflect on their participation and ability to create artwork, would increase their awareness of their new abilities.

A cognition dimension of tacit knowledge refers to a mental process that includes perception, conceiving, reasoning, and judgment that results in the accumulation of knowledge. Cognition as a state of knowing is different from the experience of feeling (Britannica, 2023). Visual cognition combines visual stimuli and cues with existing knowledge to create artistic impressions through an unconscious decision-making process that considers the visual input, art-making process, and artistic impression (Vernon, 2014). Chamberlain (2022) considers the psychological and neuroscientific aspects of the visual experience. Art-making and appreciation depend on the human mind, where perception is a mediated cognitive process (De Smedt & Jucker, 2018).

#### **2.3.4 Being creative**

Art and design education prepares people for essential creative and analytical thinking skills that foster balanced, interdisciplinary 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. By using this approach and habits, Vanada (2015) suggests that countries all over the world are faced with serious challenges, where artists and designers who can think creatively are uniquely qualified to contribute meaningful answers to such critical social issues. Shanks *et al.* (2014) indicate that creative innovation and design thinking offers a model to revitalise practice-based arts in contemporary academia.

Industries in both the private and public sectors are employing creative professionals such as designers and artists to find new, creative ways of handling challenges in complex environments, using creativity as a strategic tool (Haselwanter & Soila-Wadman, 2014). Similarly, the creative process can foster empowerment by offering choice and an opportunity to explore oneself, capabilities, and various experiences through creative expression (Holdren, 2017).

Creativity is central to this shift and creativity-focused pedagogy is an essential starting point for initiating re-directive design practice. Creativity unlocks opportunities for inquiry and presents us with novel ways to think about social change—to take risks and step into the unknown (Berman, 2017). Creativity is appreciated for its innate ability to empower participants by encouraging a sense of agency and the ability to foster (generative) imagination as they think about self-determination (Beagle, 2021).

Thus, it is important to promote teaching and learning practices that focus on developing balance: creativity and innovation with critical thinking and practical wisdom (Vanada, 2013). Bamber (2013) articulates that non-formal teaching methods that focus on creativity development prepare people to deal with changes in their lives.



## 2.4 Substance dependency

Globally, 100.4 million people have an alcohol use problem that accounts for 4.2% of the population, and 31.8 million (1.3%) people have a drug use problem (Degenhardt *et al.*, 2018). In 2019, the substance use cases globally were 161 million in 2019 (Ritchie *et al.*, 2022). In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), approximately 6 million cases compared with the global approximately 114 million cases of substance use are reported; 1,6 million are in South Africa, and 1.1% vs. .4% for SSA (Ritchie *et al.*, 2022).

The population percentage of alcohol vs. substance use is 1.9% vs. 0.9%. Africa is a key transit region for cocaine (West Africa), heroin (East Africa) and cannabis (North Africa) (Diene, 2023). Africa also has the largest gender imbalance of drug users with about 7.9% men and 1.3% women (Diene, 2023; Peltzer & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2018). In a literature review of Cannabis prevalence in SSA the authors concluded, based on fifty-three studies, that more studies are needed on cannabis use (Belete, Makonen & Espinosa, 2023).

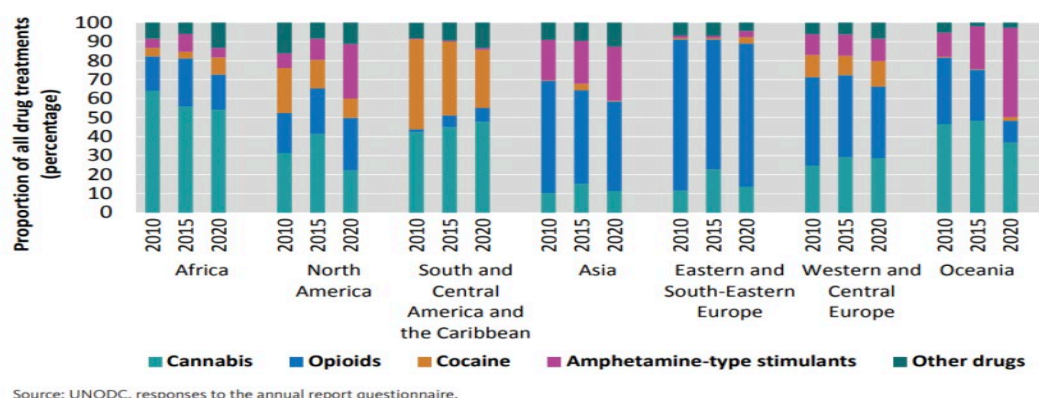


**Figure 2-3: Trends in drug treatments (Source: Diene, 2023)**

During a World Drug Day event in 2023 in South Africa to raise awareness of drug use, there was an increase from 5.6% people in 2010 who used a drug in the past 12 months to 31.6% people in 2020, and this is expected to increase by 2030 with an anticipated 40% in Africa (Diene, 2023). In South Africa, there was an increase in designer drugs, with Nyope, a cocktail of heroin, cannabis, and antiviral drugs, being used most. Based on 2012 data, it was reported that out of 26,453 people, between 24.4% and 27.6% use drugs in South Africa, with cannabis the most (4%), followed by cocaine, amphetamine, inhalants, sedatives, hallucinogens and opioids (Petzer & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2018). They further report that most users are in the Western Cape Province (7.1%), followed by Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, and Eastern Cape provinces (4.1%-6.3%). Lastly, KwaZulu-Natal, North-West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces (2.7%-3.6%). The cannabis use in South Africa is mostly non-daily 5.1% people between 15 and 64 years, followed by 2.8% who use it every day (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2021).

Many persons with a drug use problem also find it difficult to access treatment facilities, for example, in South Africa, the percentage of people who indicated this amounted to 37.9% (Myers *et al.*, 2022).

Drug use is prevalent in South Africa and needs to be addressed. Substance use disorders also globally contribute to the burden of disease (Myers *et al.*, 2022). Substance use disorders are regarded as negative life stressors that contribute to a feeling of being unsafe, which negatively impacts the individual's lived experience.

#### **2.4.1 Needs of substance dependent persons**

Wechsberg *et al.* (2008) indicate that there is a pressing need for behavioural interventions to address increasing substance use among individuals in South Africa. Furthermore, the findings indicated the need for policymakers and prevention and intervention programmes in South Africa to consider adolescent substance use dependence and deviant behaviours (Pahl *et al.* (2010).

The needs of substance-dependent individuals are more than mere treatment; they require a comprehensive approach that encompasses rehabilitation, skills development, and social reintegration (Babor *et al.* 2011). Understanding the needs of substance-dependent persons is essential to designing effective interventions. For example, the psychological aspect of addiction is important, but multifaceted needs ranging from mental health support to vocational training are also needed (Birtel *et al.*, 2017). To nurture substance-dependent individuals to an empowered state involved not only breaking the cycle of addiction but also equipping them with the skills and resources necessary to lead fulfilling lives (Kim *et al.*, 2016).

Myers *et al.* (2022) estimate that the prevalence of substance use disorders continues to increase in South Africa, with a lifetime prevalence rate to be around 13%. This emphasised the urgency of implementing robust interventions to mitigate the impact of chemical substance use, especially considering the challenges faced by South Africa's youth (Madisha & Skhosana, 2022).

#### **2.4.2 Skills Development of substance dependent persons**

Many substance abusers, for example, alcohol abusers, experience shame, and creative outlets offer an effective means of expressing their feelings, especially when verbal expression is challenging (Plomer, 2022).



Traditional treatment programs often overlook creative processes in substance-dependant treatment (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Creative methods can encourage self-expression and instil hope for the future (Jorgensen, 2015), facilitating recovery from various negative concerns (Plomer, 2022).

There is a need for interventions in substance-dependant treatment to foster and develop self-identity, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Breslin *et al.*, 2003; Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, creative thinking might comfort or assist substance users with coping strategies to manage stress, and enhance self-awareness (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014; Iszák, Griffiths & Demetrovics, 2016). In fact, Dennis (2020) states that drugged bodies are often regarded as passive, suffering with negative experiences, while Skop (2016) suggests that participants in creative processes can benefit with a therapeutic value.

Literature reveals that utilising creative processes in different environments have been successfully employed (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Creativity enriches the recovery of numerous negative concerns and heals them in several important ways (Plomer, 2022). Imagination similarly unlocks opportunities for inquiry and presents novel ways to think about social change to take risks to step into the unknown (Berman, 2017). Furthermore, creativity is also defined as problem-solving where humans can create, relying not only on mental processes, but also on the body and physical motion towards an improved state (Palmiero & Piccardi, 2020).

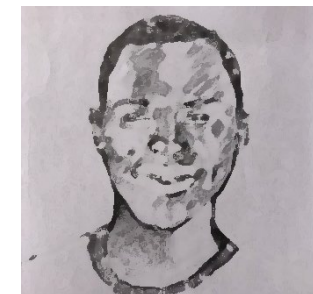
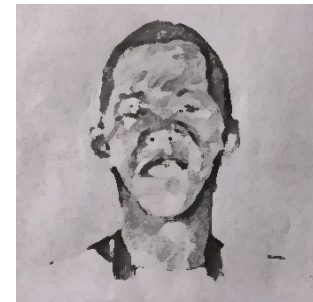


**Figure 2-4: Anonymised sketches of the participants**

Creative processes in substance abuse treatment could help participants work through conflict and denial during their recovery. Addiction is often associated with denial (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Art processes in treatment enabled participants to reflect on their issues and find objective solutions since it allows them to recognise and address feelings of shame on their healing journey (Matto *et al.*, 2003).

Adedoyin *et al.* (2014) suggest that creative processes can complement treatment, foster self-improvement, and lead to a successful and altered lifestyle. Researchers are currently exploring innovative co-creation in this area and consider the lack of follow-up and long-term

interventions as additional and the need for information on the demographics of the participants (Nathan *et al.*, 2023).

Using visual thinking involves exploring feelings by acknowledging the thoughts they evoke and expressing them through artwork (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Palmiero and Piccardi (2020) suggest that visual creativity can be embodied, supporting the idea that embodied mechanisms also facilitate conceptual interpretation. While Iszaj *et al.* (2016) refer to the interpretation of creative work as a process called "Binspirational," where the artist-research actively participates, and the artwork is guided by unconscious and pre-conscious functioning.

Creativity in this context emphasises a human-centred approach to ensure participants' safety (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013:570). Engaging in creative processes provided unrestricted opportunities for self-discovery, empathy, and freedom of expression. Sessions occurred in a non-threatening space, promoting participants' self-esteem, encouragement, and hope for the future (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Lawton and Storz (2018) highlight these artistic collaborations among participants within a community or vulnerable group increase interest and appreciation in art, serving as both a pleasurable activity and a means of communicating on important issues.

During my research, I, used creative methods to gain a better understanding of how creative processes can be applied in compromised/self-destructive contexts, with one target group comprising persons with a substance addiction problem.

## **2.5 Lived experience**

The German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) established the concept of lived experience as participating in life and knowing it from experience (Boodt & Mos, 1993; Lindseth & Norberg, 2021:2). It is the inside of an experience as it reveals what is important in life beyond and before conscious reflection (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021).

Humans experience their own life worlds as these manifest in particular situations at specific times and locations. It includes choices and options influenced by the environment and how the person lives through and responds to these influences (Given, 2008). Experiencing life is unique to each person since it is embedded in their contexts and life worlds (Woodgate *et al.*, 2021). When studying a specific phenomenon, lived experience as a concept of such a study captures the "is-ness" of the person being in that situation (Finlay, 2014). Visse *et al.* (2019) refer to the liminal nature and complexities of a lived experience where phenomenology leans into the dimension of human reality, where it is difficult to express it verbally, yet important to establish both verbal and non-verbal knowing (Lindhout *et al.*, 2020).

Knowing associated with lived experience considers emotional, intuitive, personal, spiritual, and embodied ways of knowing to understand the lived experience of a person (Springgay *et*

*al.*, 2005). It is therefore necessary to use methods that identify the known and unknown, named and unnamed, consciousness and unconsciousness, and the certain and uncertain (Hashem, 2023). The process of exploring the lived experience of a person allows that person to be reflexive and leads to self-awareness (Given, 2008; Trout, *et al.*, 2022) through promoting bodily response, exploration, discovery, and dialogue (Springgay, 2005). Lived experience appears at different levels of experience, namely, kinaesthetic, perceptual, cognitive, and creative, where knowledge emerges as a process of meaning-making (Seregina, 2020).

It is possible to gain insights into the way people learn, think, and feel about themselves and their relations with others, both human and non-human, with meaningful exploration during engaging activities with them (Nathan *et al.*, 2023; Watson, *et al.*, 2023). Each person experiences life uniquely within many layers of cultural and social meanings (Lambert *et al.*, 2021) that may be influenced by social ills in compromised contexts (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2018). Experience as a phenomenon for visual art is complex, multi-faceted, and depends on the context (Chamberlain, 2022:15). It may be difficult to articulate a lived experience and Dennis (2020) conceptualises the human body, a vehicle for human existence (Lambert *et al.*, 2022) being a sensing, temporal and environmental body in his study of drugged bodies that typically are depicted as passive and detached from reality.

Engaging in the study of people's lived experience of a phenomenon emphasises the essence of that phenomenon (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019). A lived experience may be artful, evocative, expressive, and strike a chord within, thus contributing to aesthetic and personal knowing (Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000). A deeper understanding can be obtained using several different learning and expression modes (Leavy, 2018; Martikainen, 2019).

The reliability of the lived experience research results rests on an all-embracing validation of thoroughness and sensitivity of the interpretation and analysis that acknowledges the integrity of the person's lived experience (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). From lived experience, personal views, opinions, or injustices can emerge, and as a result, authenticating the instant perception of a life-world phenomenon is essential (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021).

The researcher and participant jointly ascribe meaning to the experience through a dialogue evoking different kinds of knowing (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). An understanding of narrated lived experiences is validated through explanation and structural analysis. Therefore, it is not about obtaining explicit opinions but rather the meaning of lived experience (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). This leads to reflection about the acts, and through the talks, a meaning is established for them, emphasising that they will have to be revealed without altering their structure (Fuster Guillen, 2019).

To improve one's practice, we must express our lived experience to highlight improvements. If we neglect to reflect on our experiences, we will hardly find ways to improve our practice (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021).

## 2.6 An A/R/Tography perspective

An A/R/Tography perspective provides an opportunity for the researcher to also apply her artist-teacher roles to the study using both image and word to complement, refute each other when inquiring into the lived experience (Springgay *et al.*, 2005). They suggest that understanding and experiencing happen during the unfolding of the creation process, artwork, and engagements with the participants and environment. Moreover, the concept of A/R/Tography has been associated with the integration of the roles of artist-researcher-teacher (a/r/t) as active processes and practices of living for each role, underscoring its multidimensional nature (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005; Ibáñez, 2015). A/R/Tography, as a method for delving into the lived experiences of individuals within intricate contexts, has gained attention across diverse fields. The utilisation of art in research has demonstrated its ability to elicit emotions, foster empathy, and encapsulate the multi-sensorial nature of lived experiences (López *et al.*, 2018). Notably, visual art has proven effective in fostering dialogue within interdisciplinary teams and facilitating research processes that recognise diverse knowledge bases and cultural contexts (Polfus *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, arts-based research (ABR) has been acknowledged as a potent praxis for addressing socio-ecological challenges and facilitating democratic processes, including participation, between researchers and participants in the research (James, 2019).

ABR is the selected strategy to investigate lived experiences from the artistic perspective of A/R/Tography and will be discussed in more detail in the research methodology chapter (Chapter 3). In this study, the acronym CARER refers to the researcher as a representation of the interrelated roles of artist, researcher, and teacher.

The next sub-section introduces the A/R/Tography concept was considered in this study, followed by short discussions of the three roles of artist–researcher -teacher (a-r-t).

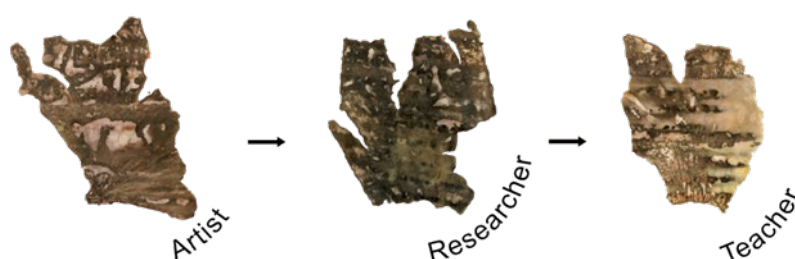


Figure 2-5: Photograph of peeled skin of an onion representing the CARER roles.

### **2.6.1 ART introduction**

In this sub-section, the approach to art for this study is presented. Firstly, the concept of art is considered, followed by the potential impact of art in research, and finally, art creating/making versus art doing.

### **2.6.2 Conceptualising art**

Davies (2015) has written extensively about defining art from a philosophical viewpoint and warns that defining art needs to consider all its aspects. This is probably the reason why one single definition for art could not be found. Stuckey and Nobel (2010) argue that while art is often subjective and open to interpretation, it is commonly understood as a form of creative expression that reflects the artist's imagination and skill. Throughout history, art has played a central role in culture, serving as a means of communication, storytelling, and reflection of societal values and beliefs.

This study accepts the proposition that the value of art could be found in individual experiences (Melcher, 2014). This implies that meaning is built on the individual level but in reaction to a social world. Through the actions and interpretations of the individual, glimpses of that social world could be seen.

#### ***2.6.2.1 Materiality for sustainability***

Reflection on the relationship between materials and how meaning is expressed in art is a valuable method for uncovering the processes that occur during artistic creation. Barrett (2020) discusses how material has become recognised as a significant source of political and social meaning in contemporary sculpture, emphasising the importance of material agency in conveying messages. Additionally, Gazit *et al.* (2021) explore the therapeutic alliance and reactions to artistic experiences with art materials in art therapy, highlighting how artwork can express inner emotions and deepen relationships between clients and therapists. Responsible sustainable design debates and discussions are taking place in the professional realm and in education. Reflection on the relationship between materials and the expression of meaning in the form of art is a valuable method for uncovering the processes that occur during artistic creation (Archibald & Blines, 2021).

#### ***2.6.2.2 Art-making/creating and doing***

The act of making/creating and doing is at the core of art, design, and craft practice. Making occurs in various forms, on many levels, and in different contexts. The act of making and doing is powerful; through making we also make meaning, communicate meaning, and share meaning. The act of making has a physical–cognitive dimension. Working processes and the contrasts of making and thinking together provide rare insights into a close working partnership



from two distinct viewpoints and can provide a model for a very distinct collaboration based upon printmaking and social engagement (Coldwell, 2015).

The creative art-making process itself provides unique insights into human thought and action. It has the potential to develop skills in visual art, increasing creativity during the person's methodological exploration of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Chamberlain & Wagemans, 2016; Schouten *et al.*, 2014). Skilled artists possess a combination of techniques, personality traits, and perceptual advantages that can be studied to understand the underlying processes of artistic production (Pelowski *et al.*, 2016).

The interrelations between art viewing and art-making support the importance of aesthetic inquiry, possibility thinking, and creativity in visual arts education (Pavlou, 2013). Through art-making, one can express the desire to transform everyday materials into artworks of value, mutable and intangible, thoughts, and feelings, both bodily and emotional (Mills, 2009). In their study about mental health and wellbeing in young refugees, Gentle *et al.* (2020) found that the art-making process resulted in a decrease in challenging behaviours and an improvement in emotional responses.

#### *2.6.2.3 Potential impact of art*

Wood *et al.* (2011) and Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs (2016) indicate that art has a significant impact on individuals across diverse domains. The creative exploration given to a piece of art can be influenced by various factors, including the artist's utilisation of mark-making, colour, emotion, and expression. The diverse varieties of the subject matter and the artist's identity underscore the multifaceted nature of art's influence. The fundamental benefits inherent in the arts experience have been acknowledged as contributing to the well-being of vulnerable communities and individuals (McCarthy *et al.*, 2004). Art methods support the agency and inclusion of marginalised populations during periods of complex and rapid demographic and societal changes (Mikkonen *et al.*, 2020).

Community-built initiatives have been valued for their positive impact on individuals, community groups, and neighbourhoods, provided they have a lasting effect (Melcher, 2014). Community-based arts and cultural activities contribute to place-making, addressing tensions in communities impacted by socio-economic problems (Nowak, 2007). Participation in community arts enhances personal development, imagination, and well-being (Newman *et al.*, 2003). However, Van der Vaart (2022) cautions that arts projects alone cannot change a community; their evaluation must achieve sustainable effects. Art impact research often defines art as a tool for community development, but many engage in arts for the immediate experience rather than specific outcomes, finding it rewarding (McCarthy *et al.*, 2004).



The process of creating and experiencing art is personal and contextual, varying from individual to individual, artwork to artwork, and context to context, making generalisation of individual experiences impossible (Belfiore & Bennett, 2010; Melcher, 2014; White, 2006). While greater social inclusion can result from inclusive arts practice, the art itself should remain the primary focus (Janssen *et al.*, 2014:24). Community arts, especially for youth, have the power to transform societies by imparting skills and fostering community involvement (Power, 2012). Research supports the benefits community-based arts provide to communities and individuals, including increased well-being, improved communication, and confidence (Janssen *et al.*, 2014).

Working with communities and individuals in arts projects has ethical, cultural, and legal implications that should be considered in research studies (Janssen *et al.*, 2014). They further suggest that people need assurance that projects will operate with integrity and in the community's best interests.

#### *2.6.2.4 Artistic expressions*

In the sphere of artistic expression, the interconnection of “art-making” and “doing” unfolds as a captivating narrative, each term contributing a unique dimension to the creative process. Whereas “art-making” captures the tangible act of crafting, line-making, shapes, and colours on canvas, embodying an artwork (Yokochi & Okada, 2020), “art doing” forms an integral part of the creative process. Within the artist's journey, the concept of “doing” expands beyond the confines of physical creation. It encompasses the process of ideation, the experimental dialogue with materials, and the reflective recollection of the artist's evolving narrative. These interconnected concepts guide us into the dynamic realm of creativity, where the creation of art involves artistic exploration and expression (Brinck & Reddy, 2019). Artists make deliberate decisions to utilise certain materials for a specific reason. The recognition of the inexpressible quality of ‘letting be’ must endure for the viewer in the artworks that one needs to return to again and again, as they reveal that ambiguous sense of embodiment and the constant, surprising ability of static material to embrace more than a meaningless artwork (Mills, 2009:18).

### 2.6.3 An artist's perspective

A/R/Tography, from an artist's perspective, is a transformative method that transcends traditional boundaries between art and research. As an artist engaged in this unique approach, the process involved delving into the depths of lived experiences through a fusion of artistic expression and research exploration. Artists, in their creative endeavours, have adopted an approach that recognises the intricate interplay between traditional artistic practices conducted face-to-face and their integration with digital platforms (Le Blanc & Irwin, 2019).



From an artist's viewpoint, A/R/Tography served as a framework for analysing experiences and fostering creative expression (Le Blanc & Irwin, 2019). In the realm of A/R/Tography, the artist assumed a multifaceted role as a researcher, teacher, and, foremost, as an artist. The act of creating artistic impressions became a dynamic vehicle for unravelling the intricacies of human experiences within complex contexts. Through creativity, employing drawing and sustainable printing techniques, the artists navigate the nuanced understanding of their artistic skills, capturing the essence of diverse narratives (Günes *et al.*, 2020; Masod, 2024). It also allows for the exploration of hope and narrative construction during challenging periods, enabling the artists to navigate the intricacies of their practice within contemporary contexts (Le Blanc & Irwin, 2019).

Visually, the representation of A/R/Tography as an ABR method often manifests as overlapping shapes, symbolising the interconnected nature of the research process. This visual metaphor encapsulates the intricate relationship between the three roles represented by (a-r-t) and participants, as well as the layers of meaning woven into the artwork itself. The research journey unfolded as a collaborative endeavour, with each drawing line and printed artwork reflecting the layered and dynamic visual narrative being explored. Creative workshops served as a bridge between artistic exploration and lived experiences (Günes *et al.*, 2020; Irwin & Springgay, 2017; Masod, 2024). The collaborative nature of such workshops captures the essence of shared exploration and knowledge construction through the artist's self-reflection.

From an artist's perspective, A/R/Tography is not merely a method; it is a journey of discovery. It involves teaching, learning, and reflecting, all converging into a powerful narrative told through the language of art. The canvas becomes a dialogue, and each drawing mark and stroke contribute to a visual narrative that transcends the boundaries of traditional research,

offering a profound and evocative way to explore the complexities of the human experience (MacDonald, 2014).

#### **2.6.4 A researcher's perspective**

Approaching a research study with an A/R/Tographical perspective opened a rich terrain where the boundaries between research and artistic expression blurred, providing a nuanced lens through which to study and understand complex phenomena.



As researchers engage in A/R/Tography, they follow a process that involves and embraces the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher, thus creating a dynamic interplay between these facets (Kruger, 2012). The following research strategies were selected to support the A/R/Tography perspective from a research viewpoint: arts-based research (ABR); interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA); and autoethnography, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

An ABR strategy has been used in various studies within, for example, the field of visual arts education and interdisciplinary studies (Huerta, 2021; Ibáñez, 2015). Coşkun (2018) employed A/R/Tography as an arts-based research method in a self-history project within visual arts education, demonstrating its application as a research tool in the study. Furthermore, Deuze (2021) highlights A/R/Tography as an inspiring example of ABR, emphasising its integration of arts such as creative writing, poetry, theatre, song, and dance in the research process, thereby involving the ART in the process of “doing and meaning making” within the community.

This study explored lessons learned from an application of ABR arts integration in sustainable printing techniques and body mapping, shedding light on the potential of arts integration to develop deeper understandings while addressing concerns about the integrity and authenticity of learning in the arts as suggested by Wolkowicz (2017).

A/R/Tography served as a research perspective that tapped into the power of visual and artistic representation to explore and interpret lived experiences. The researcher, in the triple role of artist, researcher, and teacher, became a keen observer, interpreting the visual language of art to uncover layers of meaning embedded within the artwork. This role extended beyond conventional research methods, introducing a more immersive and sensory dimension to the exploration of research questions (Mohammed, 2018).

### 2.6.5 A creative teacher's perspective

Next, the teacher's role in the study is to teach new art-making skills during creative workshops based on the needs of the target groups.

A/R/Tography guides a transformation that goes beyond conventional boundaries. It provided a platform for students to not only develop artistic skills but also to actively contribute to the research process through their creative expressions. This approach fostered a sense of agency and ownership among students, as they became co-creators of knowledge in a learning environment that valued both artistic intuition and scholarly inquiry. The process, as seen through the eyes of a creative teacher, offers a unique and powerful avenue for merging creativity, research, and education into a cohesive and enriching experience for both educators and students alike (Ruopp & Unrath, 2019).



Teaching within the perspective of A/R/Tography involves sharing creative skills through interactive workshops. These workshops become spaces for collaboration and mutual exploration, bringing participants from various backgrounds into the realm of artistic expression. The (a-r-t) facilitates a dynamic exchange of ideas, fostering a rich tapestry of creative endeavours (Wolkowicz, 2017). A/R/Tography, when viewed through the lens of a creative teacher, represented a pedagogical approach that intertwined artistic expression, research exploration, and the facilitation of learning (López Barraza, 2023; Wolkowicz, 2017).

In the realm of A/R/Tography, the creative teacher functioned as an artist–researcher, navigating the intricate interplay between creative expression and research inquiry during the teaching process. The canvas became a tool for both personal and collective exploration, allowing the teacher to delve into the nuances of lived experiences while also fostering a participatory research environment (López Barazza, 2023). This perspective aligns with the creative teacher's approach to integrating A/R/Tography into pedagogical practices, emphasising the holistic nature of arts education. This pedagogical approach transcended traditional teaching methods, offering a holistic and experiential way for students to engage with both artistic practices and research methodologies (Irwin, 2013).

In this study, the teaching aspect of A/R/Tography unfolded in the form of creative workshops, where participants were encouraged to express themselves artistically using the skills they were taught while engaging in the research process. The creative teacher imparted not only technical skills but also facilitated a learning space that encouraged dialogue, reflection, and

the co-creation of knowledge. A/R/Tography as a perspective positions this study within a flexible, interpretive, and creative epistemology that aligns with phenomenology and autoethnography. By adopting an a/r/tographical perspective to integrate interpretive phenomenology, arts-based inquiry, and autoethnography, the researcher can engage in a living inquiry that fuses artistic creation, reflexive interpretation, and personal experience as interconnected modes of knowing.

#### **2.6.6 A/R/Tography conclusion**

A/R/Tography, aligned with the ABR method, emerged as a potential perspective to reflect on the lived experiences of individuals within complex contexts, focusing on the interrelatedness of the artist, researcher, and teacher (a-r-t) roles. It served as a platform for comprehending, communicating, and exploring complex socio-environmental interactions, while concurrently promoting empathy, inclusivity, and the agency of vulnerable populations.

From an artist's perspective, A/R/Tography serves as a valuable tool for engaging with the tensions of integrating traditional face-to-face artistic practices with digital platforms, as well as for aspiration and individual storytelling. Its role in creative scholarship emphasised the relational nature of artistic research and its impact on art education, highlighting the significance of A/R/Tography as a framework for artistic expression and inquiry.

From a researcher's perspective, A/R/Tography offered a unique avenue to engage with research subjects on a deeper level. It allowed for the exploration of complex topics in a more holistic and sensory manner, tapping into the emotional and experiential dimensions of the human condition. In this interdisciplinary approach, art became a medium through which the researcher could not only study but also co-create knowledge, fostering a more profound and empathetic understanding of the research context.

Viewed through the lens of a creative teacher, A/R/Tography represented an innovative approach to education that surpassed traditional boundaries. The process fostered a learning environment where creativity became a channel for both artistic expression and research exploration. Through this collaborative process, A/R/Tography enriched the teaching experience, encouraging participants to become active contributors to the dynamic intersection of art, education, and research. Additionally, it invites a more expansive and inclusive exploration of the human experience.

### **2.7 Creative processes**

In this sub-section, the creative processes that were used in the study are discussed to illustrate how they were utilised to teach skills that increased the participants' self-awareness, self-exploration, and reflections, which were then expressed artistically.

### **2.7.1 Creative processes introduction**

The stages of a creative process are preparation, based on observation and analysis of relevant information; incubation, for the conscious and unconscious mental activity of thinking about the opportunity for possible ideas; inspiration, considering worthwhile ideas generated from the linking of different pieces of information; and verification, where the idea is converted into an outcome (Childs *et al.*, 2022). They propose a creativity diamond framework that starts with divergent thinking based on an identified opportunity or need, followed by convergent thinking to produce a novel outcome. They also suggest possible thinking methods for each stage of the creative process.

There is a difference between creative and artistic processes, where a creative process is the succession of thoughts and actions that result in new and original ideas (Botella *et al.*, 2018). In an earlier study, they suggest that most models for creative processes follow a sequential process and do not cater for the dynamics typically associated with the artistic process (Botella, Zenasni & Lubart, 2011). Botella *et al.* (2018) regard an artistic process as starting with the design of artistic work based on some impression. They propose a visual artistic creative process that combines the strengths of the creative and artistic processes and caters for the “contextually rich, situated” nature associated with originality. They propose the following stages for a visual artistic creative process, namely, realisation, finalisation, judgement, presentation, break, and withdrawal, mapped to stages reported in the literature (Botella *et al.*, 2018).

Creative processes are intertwined with humanity, but they are not everything we do; we choose to value some aspects. Art is valuable to both the individual and society, because it contributes to the understanding of oneself and the development of human consciousnesses; for the community, it reflects our shared values of humanity and action in the world (Honeyman, 2018). Creative processes can foster new insights and the expression of emotions and conflicts, which can convey new ways of thinking, encouraging growth and healing (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014).

Processes in creativity include thinking skills that help examine new perspectives on problems, shifting among different ideas, thinking broadly, and making unusual associations (Brooks *et al.*, 2019). The creative process, as with reflection, is a critical component of making sense of learning experiences (Márquez *et al.*, 2016).

Next, creativity is discussed to establish how this could be considered in this study.

### **2.7.2 Creativity**

Creativity involves generating original ideas or products and is also considered problem-solving (Palmiero & Piccardi, 2020). It encompasses divergent thinking, idea production,

fluency, flexibility, and originality (Bialik *et al.*, 2015). A creative process involves cycles of divergent and convergent thinking (Childs *et al.*, 2022), with divergent thinking generating multiple ideas and associative thinking connecting unrelated concepts (Brooks *et al.*, 2019).

Problem-solving is crucial in creativity, requiring individuals to overcome obstacles for innovative solutions. Creativity is also influenced by the social environment, including factors like collaboration, feedback, and recognition (Amabile *et al.*, 1996). Csikszentmihalyi *et al.* (2014) introduce the concept of “flow” as facilitating creativity, a state of complete immersion in an activity. Creativity aids in inquiry and social change, empowering individuals with agency and fostering imagination (Berman, 2017; Beagle, 202). It is also utilised in therapeutic approaches, enriching recovery by providing avenues for expression and self-reflection (Plomer, 2022). Art therapy in substance-dependant treatment fosters self-expression, self-esteem, and coping skills (Jorgensen, 2015; Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014).

The link between embodiment and visual creativity was explored, highlighting imagery’s role in idea generation (Palmiero & Piccardi, 2020). Creative research has progressed significantly, expanding our understanding across disciplines (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2013). While creativity has evolved beyond its initial association with the arts to include science and technology, its interpretation varies across fields (Marquis & Vajoczki, 2012).

### **2.7.3 Creativity as an approach for learning**

Creativity is regarded as one of the significant aspects of contemporary education and society (McVeigh, 2014). In the different disciplines, creativity deals with novel and useful ideas and is therefore not only associated with art and *therefore it should be part of the learning process* (Brooks *et al.*, 2019; Cubukcu & Dünder, 2008; Márquez *et al.*, 2016).

Dorst and Cross (2001) suggest that the creative event in design or any other discipline is not only a ‘creative leap’ from a problem to a solution but rather the building of a ‘bridge’ between the problem space and the solution space. A creative event occurs as the moment of insight at which a problem and solution pair is conceptualised and is referred to as problem framing (Dorst & Cross, 2001). Márquez *et al.* (2016) advocate that these creative events as part of problem solving, should be a fundamental aspect of the learning process, forming an important dimension of the learning process. The authors suggest that to foster new human capabilities, the future will demand that today’s youth, our future leaders (Márquez *et al.*, 2016), have to think outside the box and use higher cognitive skills such as creativity, which, according to several writers, is an essential tool required to face and to flourish within the ever-changing contemporary world (Marquis & Vajoczki, 2012).

The development of creative skills can potentially improve non-technical skills by respecting the individual ‘qualities’ or values to instil ethics for individuals to recognise their own strengths

and limitations (Brooks *et al.*, 2019). A strong characteristic of the creative process is that it requires not only knowledge and understanding of the area, but also the willingness to learn and not be restricted by existing knowledge (Márquez *et al.*, 2016).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, creativity was considered to be a natural and mysterious quality that individuals were born with (Brooks *et al.*, 2019). Creativity is not a gift bestowed to only talented artists and writers, it is something people can gain through learning (McVeigh, 2014). There are common misconceptions about creativity when people have pre-existing tacit beliefs or theories about the nature of creativity, which can be damaging to nurture creativity in a learning context (Márquez *et al.*, 2016). Many people still believe that creativity is a natural talent which cannot be taught, however, studies have shown that learners can improve their creative thinking skills with appropriate guidance (Márquez *et al.*, 2016).

In this study, creativity is considered an important aspect of learning.

#### **2.7.4 Creativity and community development**

A community-based arts project is where an artist works with a community to facilitate a creative process that enables participants to express their needs, aspirations, inspirations, identity, or sense of place (Janssen *et al.*, 2014). Community-based arts projects are increasingly being used by organisations and groups in areas such as youth, health, and community development because they can reach people and seem to have a meaningful impact on their lives (Janssen *et al.*, 2014).

Making art in and with communities is not a recent phenomenon (Janssen *et al.*, 2014) and the application of participatory arts projects has become a successful mechanism utilised in community-based research. Community arts projects aim to develop creative skills while at the same time allowing participants to express themselves through participation. Arts and community projects occur in many contexts and can raise community awareness about many issues, including health promotion, environment and sustainability, urban renewal, rural revitalisation, cultural planning, community strengthening, social inclusion, and cultural diversity (Janssen *et al.*, 2014).

There are several positive aims when using a creative approach within a community since the approach can be used to stimulate dialogue, document narratives, and define and validate the aesthetics grounded in its content and culture (Frimodig, 2016). There are many renewal and regeneration programmes in cities and communities, and as a result there is an increasing awareness of the individual potential within a community, and that the arts can be utilised as a tool to activate individual and community development (Madyaningrum & Sonn, 2011).

There can be positive effects in creating social connections and addressing social barriers when engaging in the processes of community development; however, it is important to ensure



that projects are meaningful to these participants (Madyaningrum & Sonn, 2011). Through the arts, communities can be encouraged to alleviate some of the effects of globalisation (Kay, 2000). Billington, Fyfe, Milling and Schaefer (2011) concur that active participation in the arts can have a significant impact on a broader scope by improving health, well-being, increasing educational attainment, and building social capital.

There are several examples of community arts projects, case stories that produced lasting creative outputs, and other examples that brought about life-changing effects to participants, even though the creative output was viewed as insignificant (Keating, 2002).

This brief review suggests that studying the meaning of participation in community arts from the participants' point of view is a relevant area of inquiry. Informed by the literature above, the (a-r-t) was interested in exploring the meanings of participation in a community arts project from the perspective of the participants. The (a-r-t) was particularly interested in the meaning of participation and the implications of participation for how people viewed themselves and others.

#### **2.7.5 Creative process cycles**

The creative process is a multi-modal process in which conceptual, emotional, practical, and materially embodied activities cross-fertilise and support one another (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2013). The creative process involves various stages and factors that contribute to the generation of novel and adaptive ideas. Several models and studies have explored different aspects of the creative process.

In this study, the following creative methods were used as part of different creative process cycles, namely, printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, and bookbinding. Each creative method is used in one of four cycles as discussed next.

#### **2.7.6 Cycle 1: Sustainable printmaking**

Printmaking is an example of a versatile creative method that enables the expression of ideas on a surface, and making such art products can then be part of a research process (Mäkelä, 2007).

I am using printmaking because of my personal relationship with print as practice. Print has been chosen because relief printing is exactly repeatable on both paper and on other surfaces. Each print is an original image which is easily disseminated. It enables greater accessibility and, most importantly, it can promote storytelling, engage with personal and social issues, as well as create opportunities to sell the artworks (Frimodig, 2016).

Printmaking is also seen as one of the most democratic practices because you can, potentially, from nothing or without using expensive materials, create artworks.

However, for the purpose of this study, “print” or “fine print” refers to the ingenious creation of an artist, who, instead of the paintbrush and canvas, modelling clay, or the chisel, has chosen printmaking tools to express themselves (Ijisakin & Ajiboye, 2019).

#### *2.7.6.1 History and characteristics of printmaking*

The history of print drew on humans’ longing to communicate information, firstly through symbols and later through image and the printed word (Ross, Romano & Ross, 1990). The earliest evidence found from a carved relief was in 4000 B.C. by the Sumerians (Ross, Romano & Ross, 1990).

Overall, printmaking has a diverse and fascinating history that spans different cultures and time periods. Various factors, including cultural development, originality, technological advancements, and the exploration of new artistic boundaries have influenced it. Understanding the historical overview of printmaking provides valuable insights into the evolution of this art form and its significance in the broader context of art history.

In sense-making, through handling, shaping, and interacting with various materials (like paper, newspaper, printing ink, and printing equipment) the act of making is a tangible experience; our hands form the connection between mind and material (Groth, 2017). Utilising printmaking as a creative process makes the skill personal, visible, and real.

Printmaking as a creative method could encourage participants to actively develop their own personal skills, capabilities, and self-esteem by providing them with the opportunity to learn.

#### *2.7.6.2 Printmaking techniques*

Print comes in many forms and I will be focusing on using relief printing, mainly linocuts and embossed prints, collagraphs, and monotypes (Frimodig, 2016). The different steps to follow when preparing for collagraphs and embossed prints can be seen in Sub-section 5.5.5.3 where the results are described.

It is one of the artistic mediums that does not need to be experienced in depth. Trained printmakers can translate their knowledge quickly, but it can be daunting to community participants (Lawton & Storz, 2018). The transformation between drawing and printing is one of the most powerful moments that attracts creative printmakers (Ijisakin & Ajiboye, 2019).

#### *2.7.6.3 Printmaking as technique for storytelling*

The visual arts present innovative methods for approaching social challenges and for achieving new ways of thinking and behaviour changes among individuals and communities. The Artist Press Studio initiated a nationwide HIV/AIDS awareness *Paper Prayers* programme to bring about awareness amongst members of society. By utilising basic printmaking, the

participants were encouraged to express their emotions about loss and illness to dispel ignorance and misinformation about the disease of HIV/AIDS (Berman, 2010).

The creative act of producing a print in the form of a paper prayer in Berman's project boosted confidence and resulted in an empowerment that allowed proactive self-creation and was ultimately the cause of positive change at a community level. Such creativity constitutes the enactment of what Arjun Appadurai terms "futurity"; that is, "imagining a better future, which is a necessary step in the process of social healing or upliftment" (Berman, 2010).

Berman, South African printmaker, has always been deeply committed to political and social transformation in South Africa and considers how the visual arts and storytelling contribute to positive social change (Berman, 2017). Berman and the late Xaba founded Artist Proof Studio as a community art studio in Johannesburg in 1991 to address the long-term effects of racism as well as the lack of opportunities for artistic and educational training. The *Paper Prayers* workshops created the conditions for participants to achieve the agency necessary to make choices that improved their health, social welfare, and livelihoods (Berman, 2010).

Berman used the methodology of participatory action research in these printing training programmes. She documented all the narratives and photovoice images, which provided evidence that the participants understood and integrated the knowledge and transformed the information creatively into artworks. The *Paper Prayers* printmaking initiative was expanded into social and visual mapping projects and later into public advocacy murals (Berman, 2010).

The visual arts, when used as a methodology in combination with a holistic and multi-disciplinary training team, nurture the development of voice and the means to navigate one's way out of underserved environments. I consider Berman's approach to the *Paper Prayers* project as a successful example to be utilised as a model and benchmark for my study (Berman, 2010).

Their intention was to 'reflect the spirit of a healthy democracy' and the non-racial ideals expressed in the new constitution. Unfortunately, Xaba lost his life in 2003 in a devastating fire that destroyed the studio (Berman, 2018). Berman established a printing project, *Finding Voice*, through which individuals could express the trauma from the tragedy. Through using their stories and their voice, the participants created monoprints using colour and word as a way of telling a story creatively to articulate their experiences (Berman, 2018). The success of *Finding Voice* also presented a methodology of change in the form of the *Paper Prayers* campaign, seen in Figure 2.5. *Paper Prayers* is a printing project resulting from the HIV and AIDS pandemic, which focused on former President Thabo Mbeki's denialism of AIDS and APS's response to it (Berman, 2018).



**Figure 2-6: Paper Prayers hanging to dry (Source: Berman, 2010)**

The artist, Paula Rego, takes on the role of the narrator herself by inventing her own stories. By recalling and revisiting her childhood memories she freely interprets existing ones and finds pleasure in telling and retelling (Rosenthal, 2003). *Night Stories*, a complex of the series of prints where she demonstrates her ability to paint with aquatint, is another series where she used narratives as inspiration (Rosenthal, 2003). Paula as a storyteller needs an audience and printmaking provides her with a means for distributing her ideas throughout the world (Rosenthal, 2003).

Through printmaking collaboration, teaching, learning, and making can build communities to bridge theory and practice (Lawton & Storz, 2018). My own artwork, produced from site-specific experiences as well as storytelling, is related to Berman and Rego's inspirational ideas. Printmaking can inspire participants to consider their art-making as valuable. It is naturally collaborative and a dynamic medium. Traditional printmaking is combined with digital technologies, which are continually evolving (Lawton & Storz, 2018).

Sustainable printmaking techniques can play a crucial role in empowering vulnerable populations in South Africa and providing hope for their future. These techniques can contribute to their economic sustainability and help address the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality that persist in the country (Ngumbela *et al.*, 2020).



**Figure 2-7: A collection of natural materials to utilise for collagraphs collected by the author.**

By adopting sustainable practices, such as using environmentally friendly materials and minimising waste, vulnerable populations can engage in a form of creative expression while also contributing to the preservation of the environment. An example is Sithole, a young disabled artist, who was inspired by waste pickers to create a linocut based on his interest in recycling and waste management (Berman & Sarra, 2021).

In conclusion, printmaking has a diverse and fascinating history that spans different cultures and time periods. It has been influenced by various factors, including cultural development, originality, technological advancements, and the exploration of new artistic boundaries. Understanding the historical overview of printmaking provides valuable insights into the evolution of this art form and its significance in the broader context of art history.

### **2.7.7 Cycle 2: Eco-dyeing**

Natural dyes from plants, animal, and mineral resources have been used for dyeing of textiles, leather, the body, and hair, for cosmetic purposes and craft. Preserved cave paintings all over the world advocate that the use of natural dyes has accompanied humans almost for most of their history. The carbon from ash and clay is a coloured mineral pigment that have survived many thousands of years (Křížová, 2015).

Eco-dyeing is a fibre art that is a simple technique with fascinating, complex results. It requires the embodiment of a person in creative processes that are earth-friendly, mindful, meditative, and dynamic (Yusuf *et al.*, 2017). To immerse oneself completely within the process of eco-dyeing, the activity enables participants to think creatively, which encourages them to confront real-world problems and, in turn, enhance their critical thinking skills (Wiek *et al.*, 2011; Nagarajan & Overton, 2019; Remington-Doucette *et al.*, 2013).

Furthermore, integration of authentic learning experiences fosters the development of essential competencies and skills required for addressing sustainability challenges (Amena,

2020; Yadav *et al.*, 2011). Feldberg (2015) notes that by utilising second-hand equipment, recycled fabrics, and papers, easily obtained local plants, and non-toxic mordants, ecology-conscious artists with a love of experiment can create extraordinary art that derives from and respects nature and delights them with its surprises.

Eco-dyeing in South Africa has a history rooted in the development of eco-friendly and sustainable practices. The increasing awareness of environmental and energy issues has led to efforts in finding renewable and healthy resources to produce dyestuffs (Gong *et al.*, 2020). In the context of industrial property developments, South Africa has been part of broader international debates and scholarship on eco-industrial parks, which are aimed at greening industrial properties and promoting sustainable practices (Greenberg & Rogerson, 2014).

One specific technique used in eco-dyeing is eco-printing, which involves transferring colours and motifs directly to fabrics using natural materials such as Siam weeds (*Eupatorium odoratum* L) as a natural dye in eco-printing, demonstrating the use of renewable resources in the dyeing process (Maulina *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the quality of sheep leather in eco-printing dyeing can be influenced by factors such as pH and tanning agents, highlighting the importance of controlling these variables for sustainable and high-quality dyeing (Maryati *et al.*, 2022).

This study explored the achievement of sustainable eco-dyeing on paper using environmentally friendly and non-toxic natural dye sources. Pinheiro *et al.* (2023) identify cork extract as a viable natural dye for textiles, noted for its sustainability and non-toxicity. Similarly, Verma *et al.* (2019) advocate for the use of non-allergic, non-toxic, and eco-friendly natural dyes, which resonate with sustainable paper dyeing practices. Eco-friendly dyeing techniques on paper using dyes extracted from flower waste with rusted tin cans showcase sustainable colouration practices that could enhance future sustainability skills (Lachguer *et al.*, 2021). The study highlighted the effectiveness of using natural dyes derived from flower waste for dyeing wool, indicating a broader application for natural dyeing processes.

In summary, eco-dyeing practices in underserved contexts show significant potential for enhancing sustainability in textile production. Leveraging natural dyes, eco-friendly technologies, and innovative methods, the textile industry can make strides towards becoming more environmentally conscious and socially responsible.

### **2.7.8 Cycle 3: Weaving**

#### *2.7.8.1 Introduction to weaving*

Weaving has a rich history in South Africa, particularly in the informal craft industry. The craft industry plays a significant role in the economic empowerment of women in South Africa (Jokia *et al.*, 2021). In the case of Tembisa, a metropolitan area in South Africa, the African craft

business is seasonal, depending on the supply of weaving material and cultural and other functions. This highlights the cultural significance of weaving and its connection to traditional practices and events.

Furthermore, the cultural ecosystem of traditional weaving techniques in South Africa has been studied, comparing the learning differences between urban and indigenous communities (Hwang & Hsiu-Mei, 2019). The government has taken measures to preserve these techniques by registering individuals as preservers of intangible cultural heritage and launching training classes. However, they found that initially, there was a lack of interest from locals in learning weaving. This suggests that while weaving is an important cultural practice, there may be challenges in passing down the knowledge and skills to future generations.

Overall, weaving in South Africa has a strong cultural and economic significance, particularly in the informal craft industry. It is closely tied to traditional practices and events, and efforts are being made to preserve and promote these weaving techniques. However, there may be challenges in ensuring the continuity of these practices in the face of changing societal dynamics and interests (Jokia *et al.*, 2021; Hwang & Hsiu-Mei, 2019).

#### 2.7.8.2 Weaving cycle

Sustainable weaving looms and materials can play a significant role in empowering vulnerable populations in South Africa and providing them with hope. By utilising traditional weaving techniques and incorporating sustainable practices, these communities can create economic opportunities while preserving their cultural heritage and protecting the environment.

Pérez *et al.* (2020) highlight the sustainability of traditional silk fabric production using mechanical looms, such as Jacquard looms. These looms do not require external energy to operate, making them environmentally friendly. Additionally, the study discusses the use of 3D virtual forms to preserve and study historical weaving techniques without damaging fragile original objects. This approach allows for the exploration and dissemination of weaving knowledge without the need for direct access to physical artefacts.

Collaboration and open knowledge sharing are essential for scaling sustainable weaving enterprises (Armstrong & Beer, 2021). By fostering collaboration among different stakeholders, including local communities, researchers, and policymakers, these initiatives can benefit from diverse perspectives and expertise. This approach can lead to the development of innovative and sustainable solutions that address the specific needs and challenges faced by vulnerable populations in South Africa.

Sustainable weaving techniques empower vulnerable populations in South Africa, and may offer economic opportunities, creating jobs while preserving heritage and the environment. The sustainability of silk fabric production using energy-efficient Jacquard looms and 3D virtual

forms for preserving historical techniques is noted by Pérez *et al.* (2020). Underserved areas may benefit from strategies promoting long-term community engagement, including local recruitment and training (Strasser, 2012). Collaboration is crucial to scale sustainable weaving, leveraging diverse perspectives for innovative solutions (Armstrong & Beer, 2021) to address the needs and challenges faced by vulnerable populations in South Africa.

Sustainable yarn like organic cotton seems to be the preferred option (Afroz & Islam, 2021) in weaving, along with using eco-friendly dyes or leaving the yarn undyed for environmental friendliness and natural appearance (Kim, 2023). These choices resonate with the growing emphasis on sustainable practices in textile production, where environmental considerations are becoming increasingly important (Xu *et al.*, 2022). In the weaving process itself, factors such as yarn pre-tension play a crucial role in determining the geometry and properties of woven composites (Kim & Kim, 2018). Adjusting the weaving loom settings precisely is essential to reduce breakage of warp yarns and ensure the quality of the final woven product (Xu *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the application of initial warp tension is a critical technological parameter that influences yarn hanging and wear during the weaving process.

Considering mental health, initiatives supported by weaving projects addressed pandemic-induced anxiety and the increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety among young adults (Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2021). Sustainable weaving practices may mitigate organisations' social and environmental impacts, and increase people's likelihood of working in such areas by stressing inclusivity and equity (Kalkancı *et al.*, 2019). However, it is important to consider the potential mental health implications for vulnerable populations in South Africa (Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2021). Therefore, any initiatives involving weaving looms and materials should also prioritise mental health support and intervention efforts to address the potential mental health crisis.

Overall, by incorporating sustainable materials, responsible sourcing practices, non-toxic adhesives, and eco-friendly yarn choices, the construction of a weaving loom can align with principles of environmental friendliness and sustainability. These considerations not only contribute to reducing the environmental impact of textile production but also reflect a growing awareness of sustainable practices in the industry.

#### **2.7.9 Cycle 4: Bookbinding**

When it comes to professional sustainable bookbinding for skills development, there are several factors to consider. One aspect is the use of sustainable development-oriented picture books as a tool for introducing the concept of sustainability to early childhood education (ECE) teachers and children (Yeh & Li, 2022). These picture books can help children understand the importance of sustainability and their role as global citizens in creating a sustainable future.



Additionally, the aesthetic value of bookbinding should be emphasised in the teaching of bookbinding design (Liu & Zhou, 2017). Teachers should guide students to pay attention to the aesthetic value of bookbinding and combine the function of books with art, creating a fusion of emotional style and aesthetic consciousness.

In terms of sustainability in the bindery sector, a sustainable approach to book design concepts is crucial (Preprotić *et al.*, 2023). This includes eco-friendly bookbinding techniques that prioritise environmental considerations. By adopting sustainable practices in bookbinding, such as using eco-friendly materials and techniques, the bindery sector can contribute to a more sustainable future.

Sustainable bookbinding in underserved contexts plays a crucial role in promoting environmental sustainability and ensuring resource availability for marginalised populations. While traditional techniques prevailed, recent innovations emphasised eco-friendly practices in book design (Preprotić *et al.*, 2023). Integrating eco-friendly materials and processes into book design not only aided environmental conservation but also upheld the cultural significance of books as spiritual and artistic items (Liu & Zhou, 2017).

In conclusion, sustainable bookbinding in underserved contexts represents a comprehensive approach that integrates environmental responsibility, social inclusivity, and cultural preservation. By utilising frugal innovations, eco-friendly practices, and inclusive services, a more sustainable and equitable ecosystem for book production and design can be established in underserved communities.

## **2.7.10 Cycle 5: Body mapping as a contemplative creative process**

### **2.7.10.1 Embodiment**

Our bodies play an active role in creative processes, where the relationship of body and mind in creative undertakings stimulates the creative process (Stanciu, 2015). The ways in which our bodies are fundamental to the meaning-making involved in creativity shape how we make sense. Literature discusses and uncovers how one's body is fundamental to thinking, making sense of experiences and disciplines (Clughen & Willis, 2017).

### **2.7.10.2 Body mapping**

The impact of body mapping as a creative process is used in this study to enhance cognitive and skills development, with the intention of potentially resulting in an improved well-being state. Body mapping, originating in the 1980s, is utilised by researchers across fields to capture complex experiences (Cochrane *et al.*, 2022; Gunn, 2017; Lambert *et al.*, 2021). It visually conveys the body's physical and symbolic significance as perceived by individuals.

The intentional use of body mapping to address emotional needs and self-awareness is not a novel idea (Adedoyin *et al.*, 2014). Its focus developed from a collaboration in the 1950s

between psychologist and philosopher Eugene Gendlin and Carl Rogers, the Founder of client-centred psychotherapy. Focusing is an experiential practice; it accesses the body's innate potential, allowing us to tap new forward-living energies. By paying attention to the way our bodies hold an issue—called a *Felt Sense* in focusing language—we make new connections, and bring to our lives explicitly, our rich wisdom (Orner & Wernich, 2012). Utilising the focusing method during the body mapping process helped me to work creatively and resonantly with one's *Felt Sense* in a life-forward direction. Orner and Wernich (2012) express that forward movements, or “shifts”, yield new, surprising possibilities. Focusing is an innovative way to invite change and growth; it feels satisfying and life-giving rather than pain-driven because it is essentially self-resourcing.

Body maps are life-sized artworks that begin with a person tracing his/her entire body on paper. The resulting outline shapes the body world that is then explored and visually expressed through a combination of focusing methods, movement, mark-making, drawing, painting, and storytelling (Schwalbe, 2019). The group size should be manageable, at most 5–10 participants, since body mapping requires ample space to facilitate. One needs to plan for a significant amount of one-to-one time between the researcher–artist and participants to really benefit from body mapping as a data collection instrument (Black *et al.*, 2018). The body mapping method is not a blueprint but a guide to be employed by researcher–artists to suit their research. Facilitators can be flexible, but exercises should flow sequentially and smoothly to ensure the completion of all activities to create a truthful life account of the body maps (Gunn, 2017).

Body maps are original works of art and can provide exhibition pieces for external public engagement (Black *et al.*, 2018). Gastaldo *et al.* (2012) explain that body mapping engaged the participants and allowed them to communicate creatively through a more profound, more reflective process.

Black *et al.* (2018) indicate that a body map can be used for internal and external engagement and according to Solomon (2007) can be used in a group or individually. It can assist with the healing process to remember things from one's life, find answers to problems, and, most importantly, tell a story. The aim is to account for participants' development through the product of a life-size body mapping exercise. The activities used in storytelling or other narrative processes are akin to personal digital storytelling. As creative forms of expression, these body maps can allow participants and a broader audience to see and understand the situations of others in a new way (Black *et al.*, 2018). Body mapping exercises do not only focus on trauma but also on the personal stories about strengths and hopes for the future (Gunn, 2017). He based his views on his experiences of facilitating this creative process in various parts of the world with survivors in different post-conflict contexts. The author

developed a toolkit from her experiences by adding life history writing and drawings to the body maps. These body maps are recognised as individual stories and can aid in cultivating awareness of individuals in their contexts (Gunn, 2017).

Storytelling is an essential aspect of identity and culture. Through storytelling, in addition to recalling experiences and reflecting, we can also reconnect with the experience, a story, a thought, or a feeling. Additionally, telling accounts makes it possible for others to connect with us and our experiences—we bond through stories, forming communities of belonging. *Breaking the Silence*, a project of personal stories gathered by the South African National government from people who were identified as victims by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Gunn (2017) reflects that the project acknowledged the survivors' struggles during apartheid to record and express their feelings.

The South African artist, Jane Solomon, adapted body mapping into an art therapy method by using imagery and words to reflect their lives titled *Living with X: A body mapping journey in the time of HIV and AIDS* (Gunn, 2017). A formal methodology, however, was only conceived in 2000 but has since been adopted and adapted by researchers, artists, and creative arts therapists in diverse scenarios worldwide (Schwalbe, 2019).

Lys, Gesink, Strike and Larkin (2018) indicate that the increasing interest in body mapping reveals its growing promise. Several arts-based studies show its use as an art therapy technique to treat different communities of different origins. Still, there seems a need for more studies to explore arts-based therapies (Macken *et al.*, 2021) and body mapping as a research tool for vulnerable populations.

The purpose of body mapping the study involved participants in an analytical review of the meaning of their unique experiences, which they were able to achieve through a talking-drawing-symbol process that aided them in telling their story and simultaneously challenged them to search for purposes that represented an improved individual (Gastaldo, Magalhães, Carrasco & Davy, 2012).

In this study, body mapping is used as a data collection method.

#### **2.7.11 Creative process conclusion**

The creative process is a complex interplay of cognitive, social, and environmental factors. Cognitive processes such as divergent thinking, associative thinking, and problem-solving are essential for generating innovative ideas. Social factors, including collaboration, feedback, and recognition, contribute to the development and refinement of creative ideas. Environmental factors, such as the state of flow, provide optimal context for creativity to flourish. Intelligence and wisdom are also important factors that influence the creative process. Finally, creativity can be defined by its novelty, usefulness, and appropriateness. Understanding these various

aspects of the creative process can inform the development of strategies and interventions to enhance creativity in individuals and organisations.

Art-making is a dynamic and multifaceted process that has been an integral part of human civilisation. It encompasses a wide range of approaches, techniques, and mediums, reflecting the diversity of human experiences and perspectives. Through art-making, individuals can express themselves, engage with their surroundings, and contribute to the cultural fabric of society. As an essential form of human expression, art-making continues to evolve and shape our understanding of the world.

Sustainable printmaking techniques have the potential to empower vulnerable populations in South Africa, contribute to their economic sustainability, address climate change and food security challenges, and provide a platform for cultural expression and social empowerment. By adopting these techniques, vulnerable populations are not only able to sustain themselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but also finding hope for a better future.

Sustainable weaving looms and materials have the potential to empower vulnerable populations in South Africa by providing economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, and protecting the environment. By incorporating sustainable practices, supporting mental health interventions, and promoting collaboration, these initiatives can contribute to the well-being and resilience of these communities.

Professional sustainable bookbinding for skills development involves incorporating sustainable development-oriented picture books, emphasising the aesthetic value of bookbinding, adopting sustainable practices in the bindery sector, promoting language and literacy development through picture book reading, integrating sustainable approaches in technical communication programmes, and addressing ethical and political challenges in sustainable development teaching.

## 2.8 Visualising scientific landscapes: A visualising bibliometric network

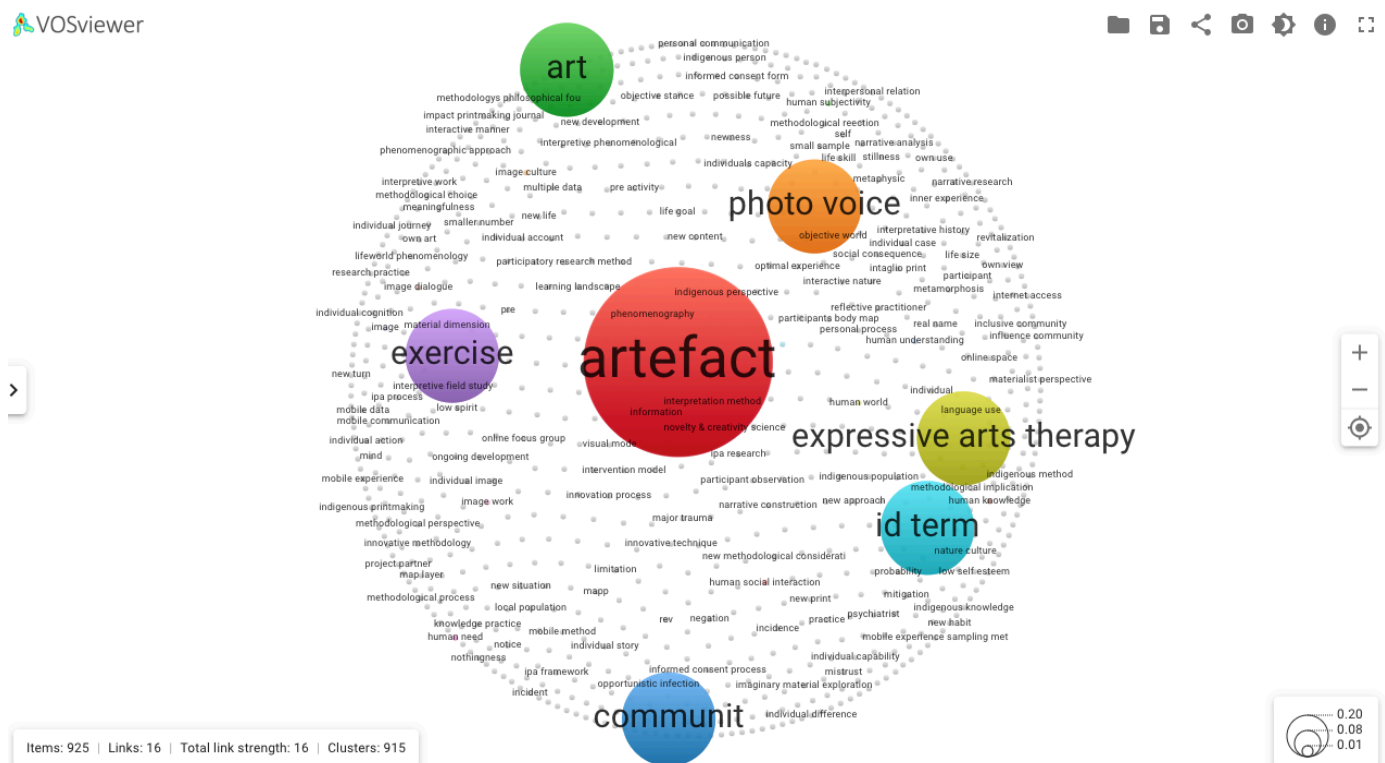


Figure 2-8: A visualising bibliometric network, Source: <https://tinyurl.com/ymmeaw7m>

VOSviewer, a robust tool for bibliometric analysis and visualisation, has found widespread application across diverse research domains. Studies spanning from the fracture performance of cement-based materials (Ahmad *et al.*, 2021) to the analysis of COVID-19 publications (Yu *et al.*, 2020) have leveraged its capabilities. With its utility in science mapping and visualisation (Yu *et al.*, 2020), citation-based clustering (Eck & Waltman, 2017), and bibliometric analysis of topics such as digital entrepreneurial education (Gillani *et al.*, 2022), urban climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts (Dabaieh *et al.*, 2021), and influencer marketing (Abhishek & Srivastava, 2021), VOSviewer stands as a versatile software tool.

Functioning primarily within the realms of bibliometrics and scientometrics, VOSviewer is adept at visualising and analysing networks encompassing scientific publications, authors, or keywords (Mokhtari *et al.*, 2020). Its application extends to constructing bibliographic coupling analysis (Rui-yun, 2023), literature measurement, and knowledge graph analysis (Chen *et al.*, 2023).

The software's features empower users to generate visual representations of networks derived from bibliographic data, unveiling relationships between authors, documents, or terms (Nuryana *et al.*, 2023).

Notably, VOSviewer has been instrumental in research visualisation, elucidating clusters closely tied to argumentative learning, guided inquiry, and other subjects (Admoko *et al.*, 2022). It has also played a role in building and describing bibliometric networks (Sari *et al.*, 2023).

In academic research, VOSviewer has become a staple for analysing co-authorship networks, revealing collaborative efforts among researchers. The size and colour of nodes can signify factors such as the number of publications or citations. Notably, the tool excels in generating co-citation maps that unveil relationships between research papers based on their frequency of citation together (Jin *et al.*, 2019). VOSviewer also facilitates the mapping of relationships between different keywords, offering insights into their joint appearances in publications.

The software's automated clustering of nodes with similar attributes aids in identifying groups or communities within a network. VOSviewer's provision of density maps is particularly valuable, highlighting areas of the network with a high concentration of connections or activity. Users benefit from the flexibility to customise visualisations by adjusting parameters such as colours, sizes, and labels for enhanced data interpretation.

Researchers frequently turn to VOSviewer to glean insights into the structure and dynamics of scientific fields, identify influential authors or papers, and explore emerging trends. Its versatility positions it as a valuable tool for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of research landscapes.

The exploration of the data using VOSviewer, found that the selected words were displayed based on their occurrences and perceived importance in the calculations. However, I realised that the articles I read did not delve into the concepts central, which are arts-based research and A/R/Tography through the lens of interpretive phenomenological approaches to gain deeper insights into *in situ* lived experiences of underserved and vulnerable populations using creative methods.

Additionally, in this study, I delved into the dynamic intersection between autoethnography and artistic research, as outlined by Daly (2021). As an (a-r-t), I employed mixed-method approaches, integrating artistic practice with meticulous documentation strategies. The focal point of my approach was the use of autoethnography as a tool for both documentation and reflection.

The VOSviewer analysis (see Figure 2.8) yielded six themes or concepts—artefact, art, photovoice, expressive art therapy, community, and exercise—that provided pertinent data for my study. However, there was a notable lack of interconnectedness among the key concepts guiding my research. The principal theme identified through VOSviewer was the absence of

relationships, contrasting with my study where all related concepts supported one another as research approaches.

Scholars in the field tended to use one or two concepts without focusing on research approaches. In contrast, the study underscored the significance of ABR, A/R/Tography as research approaches, with an emphasis on lived experience and reflection. Despite this, these concepts were not central in the VOSviewer data analysis, suggesting a disconnect in the literature.

The absence of interconnectedness in the analysed space pointed to a gap that warranted investigation. While scholars discussed similar concepts, they failed to connect them meaningfully. Data clusters were not substantial, and key themes from the studies were not utilised in an interconnected fashion. The study proposed exploring why these concepts, despite being discussed separately, were not brought together in a more cohesive manner.

A conceptual and theoretical integration gap in the literature was identified by the VOSviewer analysis. The low number of links (16) and the high number of clusters (915 clusters) suggested that studies were generated independently, with minimal cross-referencing, cumulative theorization, or shared conceptual framing, despite the large volume of studies (925 items). As a result, there was a lack of integrated, multidisciplinary knowledge that could progress the discipline beyond specialized or case-specific contributions. The necessity for research that specifically connects integrative research, incorporates theoretical and methodological viewpoints, and adds to a more coherent and cumulative body of study was highlighted by this gap.

The rigour of my study, supported by creative workshops and various methods, played a crucial role in data collection, proving valuable for the study. Although storytelling, indigenous storytelling, and reflection through creative processes were significant, they were not the primary focus in the VOSviewer data analysis. The study uncovered a gap where scholars discussed similar concepts but failed to interconnect them. The proposed research aimed to explore and demonstrate how these concepts could be used together, ultimately filling the identified gap in the literature.

This data revelation highlighted a gap, indicating that my key concepts were on the periphery rather than at the centre of scholarly discussions. The VOSviewer analysis indicated that my study was venturing into uncharted territory, with minimal evidence of scholars connecting the relationships of concepts simultaneously.

This lack of interconnectedness could be explored further to gain a better understanding of why these concepts were not being utilised together. The story uncovered in the study needed

further investigation to understand why these concepts existed on the periphery in scholarly discussions.

The narrative of the study would revolve around bringing these concepts closer, forming clusters, and showcasing their interconnectedness for a more comprehensive understanding in scholarly discussions. The gap in research highlighted a potential new phenomenon or an area requiring extensive further study.

In summary, VOSviewer has proven to be an invaluable tool for conducting bibliometric analyses, visualising research networks, and identifying patterns and trends across a wide range of disciplines, making it an essential resource for researchers seeking insights from large volumes of scholarly literature. VOSviewer was not used in the conceptualising of the study but rather to explore a visual view of related literature.

## 2.9 Proposed conceptual framework

The proposed conceptual framework based on the reviewed literature to guide the situational data collection and analysis is presented in Figure 2-9. In addition, the proposed conceptual framework to guide the exploration of the lived experience of people in compromised contexts through creative processes is shown.

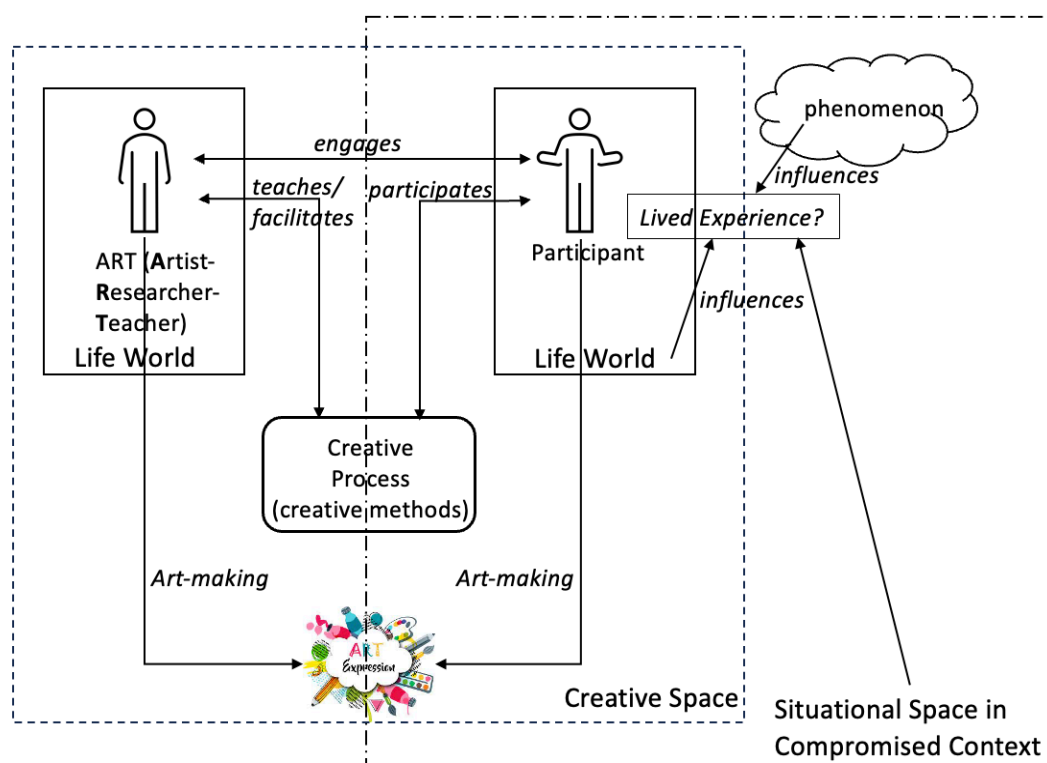


**Figure 2-9: Proposed conceptual framework to guide the exploration of the lived experience of people in compromised contexts through creative processes.**



Using an A/R/Tography perspective for this study provides a focus on the following relevant concepts: the artist-researcher-teacher as the person central to the study. The other human actor is the participant, who should benefit from their involvement in the study by gaining new creative skills and, through a reflection process, obtain a better understanding of themselves in their lived situations. The activities include: as a teacher, teaching creative skills as part of creative processes using suitable methods developed for the study; as a researcher, observing, reflecting, and interpreting the participants' involvement during the creative processes; the artwork created by the participants, as well as the reflections; as an artist; creating artistic expressions of the conceptualising of the study, interpretations of the creative, teaching, and research process, and to communicate the respective experiences and findings artistically. The objects used for the data collection and creative processes are: the artworks, participant diaries, and the researcher's reflective journal. The activities occur in a specific situation at a specific place and time, and are then influenced by the contextual factors at that point in time. The engagements are therefore situation-specific and require *in situ* inquiry to contextualise the activities. All these concepts are connected to show the relationships between them as depicted in the proposed conceptual framework in Figure 2-9.

The above conceptual framework, which presents the concepts and their relationships relevant to the study, is used to guide the research process. It presents a high-level abstract view of the study. Fascinated with circles, however, as an artist-researcher, the artistic expression represents the artist's view of the research from an artistic perspective to make artistic sense.

In essence, as an artist, I find myself drawn to the practice of breathing new life into discarded objects and repurposing materials to create artworks that embody sustainability. It is not just what I do; it is woven into the very fabric of my being. I am also fascinated by using circles to express myself artistically.

This concept is supported by various scholarly works. Barrett (2020) discusses how material has become recognised as a significant source of political and social meaning in contemporary sculpture, emphasising the importance of material agency in conveying messages.

However, I must mention the fact that not all artists follow the utilisation of banal found objects and repurposed processes. Individuals work in different ways to achieve a sustainable result. This creative practice clarifies how I personally reason and relate to other artists.

In this sense, the two main circles (egg forms) (Figure 2.10) represent the two main perspectives, the one from the artist–researcher perspective and the other from the participant

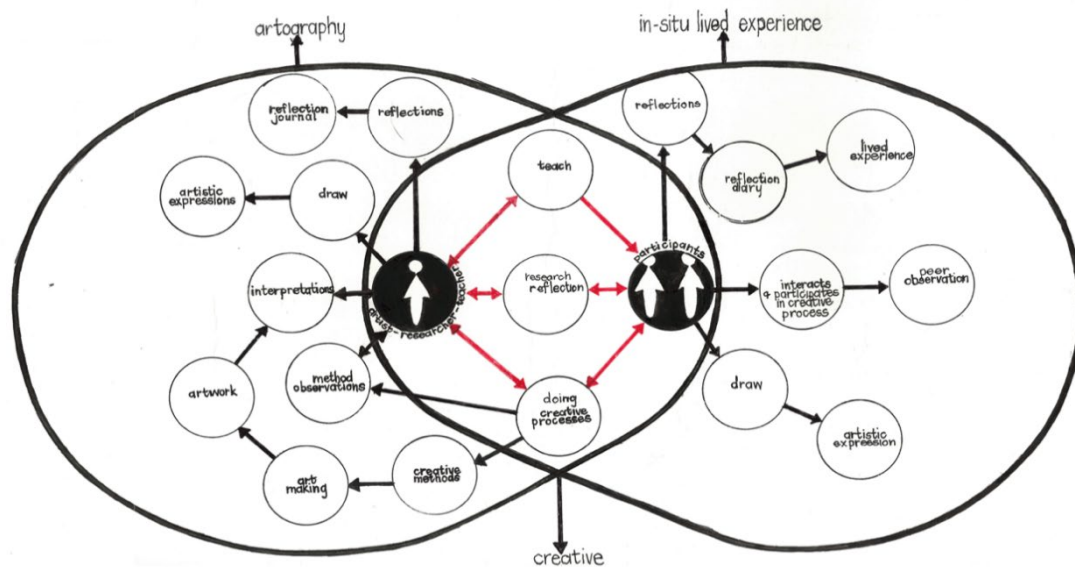


**Figure 2-10: An artistic expression of the conceptual framework**

perspective. The two shaded circles represent these two perspectives. The overlap of the two circles represents the activities where creative processes were used to teach art skills during the creative workshops. It is in this overlap that the teacher part happens while, at the same time, the researcher role also materialises through reflections of the workshop activities. One can therefore refer to three spaces, where the overlap space is the creative process workshops, the part of the participant circle outside the overlap represents the *in-situ* experiences of the participants in the form of activities where they apply the skills they were taught. The part of the circle outside the overlap on the left represents the space of the artist–researcher where the artist-researcher-teacher roles materialise through the activities related to these three roles.

## 2.10 Chapter conclusion

In this Chapter, the results of the literature review were discussed to form the conceptual basis of the study. Since the study is situated in a particular context that influences the lived experience of the study participants, these influences were considered. An A/R/Tography perspective was used to provide for the artist-teacher-researcher roles in understanding the concept of lived experience. The researcher, in her teacher role, used creative processes to develop the artistic skills of the research participants, not only to use these in the future but also to express their experiences that are often difficult to express with words alone. Vosviewer

was used to provide an alternative view of the concepts and the chapter is concluded with the proposed conceptual framework to guide the research process.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ORIENTATION



### 3.1 Introduction

An A/R/Tography perspective is proposed for this study, with the following research strategies used: interpretive phenomenology, arts-based research (ABR), and autoethnography. The

aim is to reflect and express the lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts. As I move from primarily an artist and teacher towards becoming an artist-researcher-teacher, I reflect on the three roles.

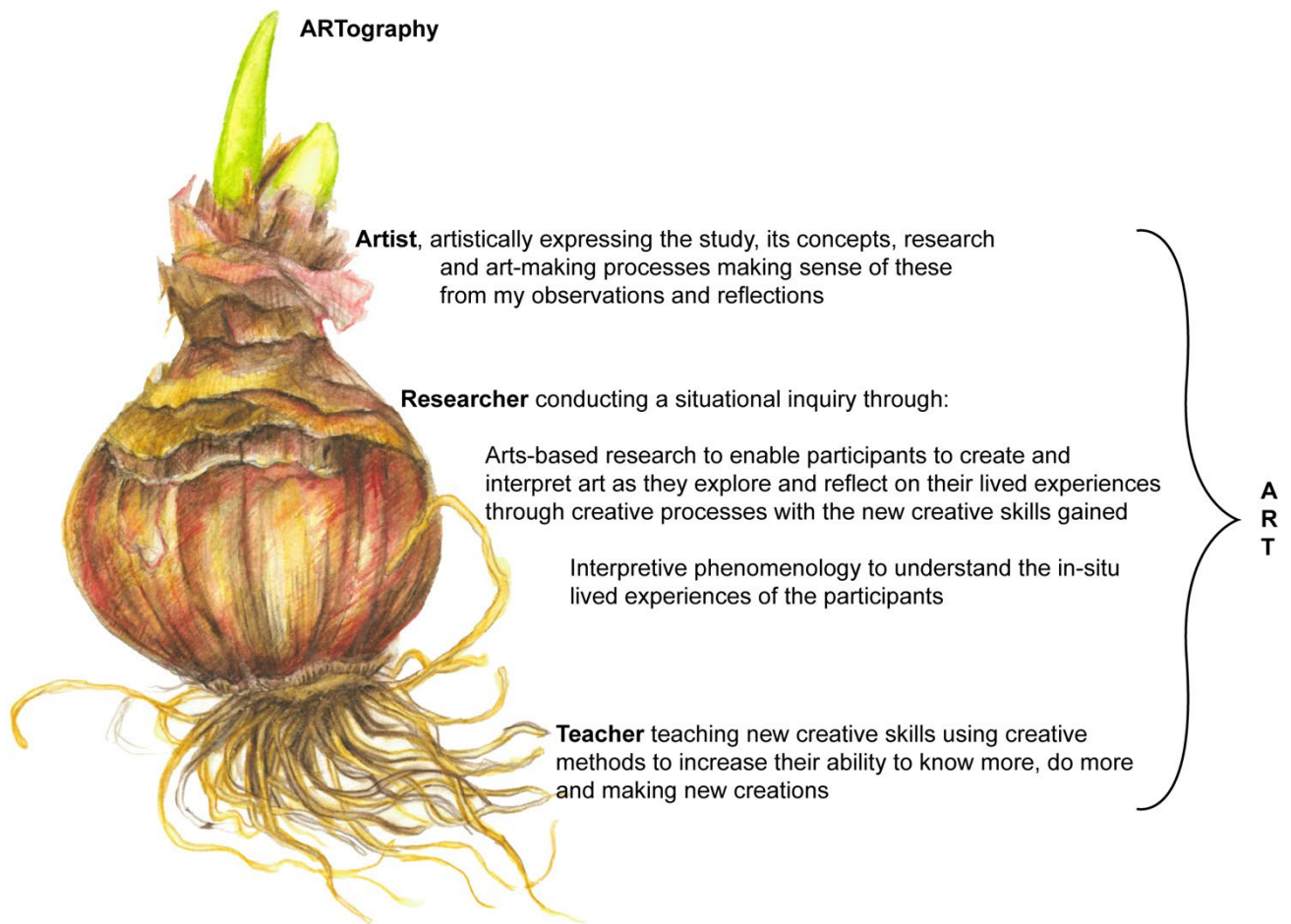


**Figure 3-1: Author's artistic expression of the research onion based on Saunders et al. (2019)**

The A/R/Tographic framework was explored using an artistic metaphor of a whole onion, in contrast to Saunders' cross-sectional onion, which expressed research themes in a layered and segmented manner. Instead of being a linear or hierarchical model, A/R/Tography was conceptualised in this representation as an interconnected and organic process. The sprouts at the top of the onion symbolised the primary idea of A/R/Tography, while the onion's neck signified the artist's identity. The onion's body represented the role of a researcher, while the roots represented the identity of a teacher. The holistic and relational idea of A/R/Tography was the result of these unified components, which together revealed how the roles of (a-r-t) were entwined.

### 3.2 Research orientation

This study uses a multimodal approach to address the identified research gap presented as the research problem. This allows for different perspectives and voices presented as text as

well as artistic expressions. It provides the movement of the researcher towards becoming a CARER through her study. A/R/Tography is fluid and can move between the different disciplines, the overlaps as the living inquiry and where engagements can lead to more engagements. It considers the intersection of art, teaching, and learning, and human research fields (refer to Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1).

### **3.2.1 Research problem**

The research problem, aligned with its associated research aim, questions, and objectives, is formulated based on the identified research gap and presented in Chapter 1, sub-section 1.3.

### **3.2.2 Philosophical orientation**

In this sub-section, the philosophical assumptions for social and art research as well as art practice, as considered for this study, are discussed. Research deals with the nature of existence where reality can be discovered (objectively) or constructed (subjectively) through a scientific process. The two main assumptions in social sciences are a positivist (reality already exists as patterns to be discovered with scientific methods) and an interpretivist stance (access to reality is gained through social construction such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Hannula *et al.*, 2005).

Where human behaviour is being explored and understood, the researcher has an important subjective role to gain meaningful insights that cannot be disconnected from a particular context, situation, or practice. In behavioural research, it is important to create new knowledge that explores, describes, and explains a person's lived experience. Knowledge emerges from interactions, conversations, and dialogues, both consciously and unconsciously (Hashem, 2023).

#### **3.2.2.1 Interpretive research**

The focus of social sciences is on a person or a collection of people and their individual and/or group behaviour as they make sense of their situation within a social context. Scientific research happens on two levels: the theoretical level to make sense of the status of the body of knowledge relating to the aim of the study, and the empirical level to establish the concepts and relationships of the field, as observed in practice. Due to the nature of social sciences, where the researcher is part of the research process, interpretations are formed based on a subjectivist view, and therefore different researchers may have different views (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

In interpretive research, the concept of reality is assumed to be shaped by human experience and social contexts. Associated with an interpretive epistemology, inductive processes consider multiple, simultaneously shaping factors based within a specific context to reconcile the different subjective interpretations (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

From the inquiry, patterns are developed to gain insights into the phenomenon investigated (Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Cuthbertson *et al.*, 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hermeneutics can also be regarded as the philosophy of interpretation (George, 2021). Knowledge created during the research process is based on the findings derived from the data and, when these are value-laden, the values need to be made explicit.

Value-laden, socially constructed perspectives require a personal and flexible approach that evolves as continuous cycles of interaction and interpretation as the researcher and the participants engage in specific real-life situations. Knowing everyday experiences can be valuable for research by focusing on what can be known and how we come to understand what we know (Cuthbertson *et al.*, 2020:95). Lindseth and Norberg (2022) view a life-world phenomenon as when we are immediately acquainted with those in the real-life situation. Researchers need to become familiar with the scope and validity of the experience of the real-life situation before it is possible to gain sufficient understanding (George, 2021).

In this study, the interpretivist philosophical view of Heidegger has been adopted. According to Dahlberg *et al.* (2008), Heidegger suggests that human existence (being) is more fundamental than human consciousness and human knowledge. Thus, the essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, which means that our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it (Reiners, 2012:2). She further states that through our involvement, we understand better, which could lead to more meaningful involvement.

Heidegger conceptualised the hermeneutic circle, where understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon are gained through shared knowledge and shared experiences (Drew, 1998). The hermeneutic circle refers to the circular nature of gaining a deeper understanding. This means a new understanding starts from existing belief assumptions and then, through a repetitive process, by considering all the aspects of the situation, as a whole, as well as specific aspects within the situation, increased understanding is gained (George, 2021).

It is therefore a circular process moving to and between the whole and its parts. Idczak (2007) mentions that in the interpretive circle, based on Heidegger's interpretive philosophy, the research was founded on participants' interpretations and not their descriptions of experiences of their interactions. Bias was considered beneficial to the research process, since Heidegger's interpretive philosophy maintains that humans are integrated into their world.

### 3.2.2.2 Art research

The philosophy of art is concerned with aesthetics about the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and good taste (Munro *et al.*, 2024). Aesthetics is a form of "sensory, imaginal, and emotional knowledge" that appears within and between multiple dynamic intersubjective realities (Chilton *et al.*, 2015; Gerber *et al.*, 2018). An aesthetic epistemology is based on a

person's unconscious memories, emotions, personal histories, and relational narratives and understands perceptions as socially constructed (Gerber *et al.*, 2020).

The philosophy of art includes interpretation, representation, expression, and form (Hospers, 2022). Artistic sensibility is regarded by Ingman (2022) as the sensitivity and capacity to appreciate the artwork, and to respond when the artwork itself ignites a response. He argues that artistic sensibility is an important requirement for art research for disseminating research, which should be represented based on artistic sensibility.

Art research assumes pluralistic ontologies and eclectic epistemologies, resisting rigid classifications and methodologies (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). According to Hashem (2023), a work of art has hermeneutic and interpretive qualities. Through engaging with art as a social practice during an empirical inquiry, it is possible to learn more about oneself and to gain a deeper understanding of others (Sherman & Morrissey, 2017).

It is not easy to find a single definition for art research because the relationship between art and scientific knowledge can be interpreted in different ways with different meanings (Cazeaux, 2017). He therefore suggests that artistic research needs to be considered in terms of how its combination of art and knowledge is informed by the adopted philosophical orientation.

### *3.2.2.3 The difference between interpretive and art research*

Based on the above discussions of interpretive and art research, both focus on understanding human experiences from a subjectivist stance to attach meaning to the experience. Data are typically qualitative and context-specific. The difference between interpretive and art research is their respective philosophical orientations and the methods used.

Previously mentioned, McNiff (2008) and Leavy (2015; 2018) together position ABR as an interpretive and emergent style of inquiry that broadens the understanding and dissemination of research. Sunarto (2023) refers to values as truth, in terms of reality; goodness as a moral measure; and beauty to give perceptual satisfaction. In art research, the aim is to find one element of value, whereas art creation uncovers all the possibilities of human value(s) relevant to the study.

Sunarto (2023) further suggests that artwork is the container to represent the essence of thinking about human values, such as thoughts or feelings of a lived experience. These authors' notions of art as a location and a method of producing knowledge are similar. Holistically, these viewpoints lead to an idea of art as an epistemic medium that explores, interprets, and shares lived experience rather than simply a depiction. The creation of art is inspired by the artist's ideas, values, feelings, aspirations, and reactions, resulting in new knowledge created with conventional and imaginative creative methods (Sullivan, 2014).



Sherman and Morrissey (2017) caution against valuing art only for its beauty and emphasise its social and epistemic importance. They argue that through the artwork's communicative ability it is possible to gain self-knowledge as part of one's potential personal growth. This then highlights the social importance of art appreciation. Like traditional social sciences research, art research also aims to systematically collect knowledge about how humans make sense of situations.

Art creation, on the other hand, uses creative forms for the artist to express what they want to reveal or expose the selected values through a deep interpretation and appreciation of the art process. In research, knowledge is created through a systematic process of analysing collected data, while art creation is the application of knowledge and is about values as symbolic and artistic forms.

Creating a visual representation (if a visual arts approach is used) is the outcome of what the artist interprets based on what is seen, combined with several ideas and images, as well as continuously interacting with the situation and context of the study at the same time – this then becomes part of the research process (Sullivan, 2014). Sherman and Morrissey (2017) conclude that the social and personal value of engaging with art is important for gaining a deeper understanding of individuals and communities.

#### *3.2.2.4 Creative practices*

Creative practice can be regarded as creating new knowledge through artistic modes of participation (Niedderer & Roworth-Stokes, 2007; Sullivan, 2014). However, creativity is based on existing significant knowledge and creative activities that rely on tacit knowledge to give the shape a recognisable form (Edmonds & Candy, 2002; Gerber *et al.*, 2018). The above authors argue that the principles of research also apply to the arts.

Knowledge in art research emerges as knowing (what, how, and why), which is suspected but not yet fully conscious formulations or descriptions, such as emotions, experiences, and connections made by engaging in creative processes (Seregina, 2020). The study is intrinsically linked with knowing-in-action, similar to what Clughen and Willis (2017:15) suggest, that knowing requires action and touching and forming materials that stimulate the brain. Propositional knowing (knowing that) and procedural knowing (knowing how) are posited, and these forms of knowing are intrinsically interwoven with material, experimental, and communicative spaces (Visse *et al.*, 2019).

#### *3.2.2.5 Art research and practice differences*

Although there are similarities between art research and art practice, there are also significant differences. Art teachers know that “as we grow, we learn different things; but as we grow

artistically, we learn things differently”, thus potentially empowering people when they recreate information differently based on their own making sense of a situation (Sullivan, 2014).

Sunarto (2023) refers to the difference between art and art research, where art research aims to find the truth in human values and thoughts, and art creation aims to reveal values through a creative process. Visual art is influenced by the perspectives of the artist, artwork, and others, and art practice is about some questions that are interpreted and explained by the artwork (Sullivan, 2014). It considers how elements of art such as line, colour, value, texture, form, and space are organised or composed according to the principles of art that are balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, unity/variety to give structure (Zhao *et al.*, 2014), and convey meaning (Tyler, 2007).

MacDonald and Moss (2015) use the metaphor of a border, also a type of liminal space, to explain the practices on either side but also how they traverse into a common space that represents the border. They also refer to the term “becoming” as a way to realise the nexus between art and research practices. Sullivan (2014) explains the practice of arts-based research as “dynamic, continuously ‘in-folding’ and ‘un-folding’, opening up and drawing together possibilities, problems, and provocations”.

The approaches for creating art and conducting research are perceived as parallels and tensions encountered between the two approaches (MacDonald & Moss, 2015). A/R/Tography functions as a research perspective and creative practice, focusing on the liminal space in-between research and art practices for subjectivities-to-become through an iterative process of moving towards moments of becoming (Irwin, 2013).

MacDonald and Moss (2015) suggest that art and research practices can both enrich and inhibit each other. This nexus between art and research practices as a border can also be regarded as an “in-between” space of transition or a liminal space (MacDonald & Moss, 2015; Irwin, 2013).

#### 3.2.2.6 Knowledge creation

Knowledge is co-created during research interactions by using suitable methods as probes (Seregina, 2020). As much as human behavioural research assumes a subjective stance, arts-based research assumes a pluralistic and intersubjectively co-constructed reality (CohenMiller, 2018; Gerber *et al.*, 2018; Gerber *et al.*, 2020).

Language, as words or images, combines interpretation and communication to construct relational realities and new knowledge (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). Artworks do not have meaning by themselves but require someone, such as the artist or other persons, to interpret and attach

meaning to them. Art assumes an epistemic eclecticism (CohenMiller, 2018) or a dialectical epistemology for arts-based research, or an aesthetic epistemology (Gerber *et al.*, 2020).

Knowledge resulting from creative processes emerges as sensory and bodily experiences (Leavy, 2018). Aesthetic knowledge is idiosyncratic, circuitous, dialectic, dynamic, and emergent (Gerber *et al.*, 2018) as well as being characterised by reflexivity and compassion (Leavy, 2018). They assert that from the newly created knowledge, it is possible to move to “doing” imaginative art-making.

Knowledge is socially constructed, and not found, in a complex interpretation and meaning-making process that engages relational contexts and social interactions. Similarly, artistic creations do not have meaning in themselves and must have the ability to make sense to an audience (CohenMiller, 2018). Such visualisations are created to make something visible that was hidden to the observer. Art is regarded as the process of expressing knowledge symbolically through some art form and is appropriate to express the interpretation of values (Sunarto, 2023).

Aesthetic knowledge can be constituted by imagination, emotions, and spirituality arising from human experiences that may not be easy to verbalise. Artwork can be the artistic expression of the lived experience that is created and recreated through an artistic experience to nurture insight and attach meaning (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). It is therefore an alternative inquiry method into something that may be otherwise inaccessible.

Le Grange (2018) identifies four other possibilities for knowing:

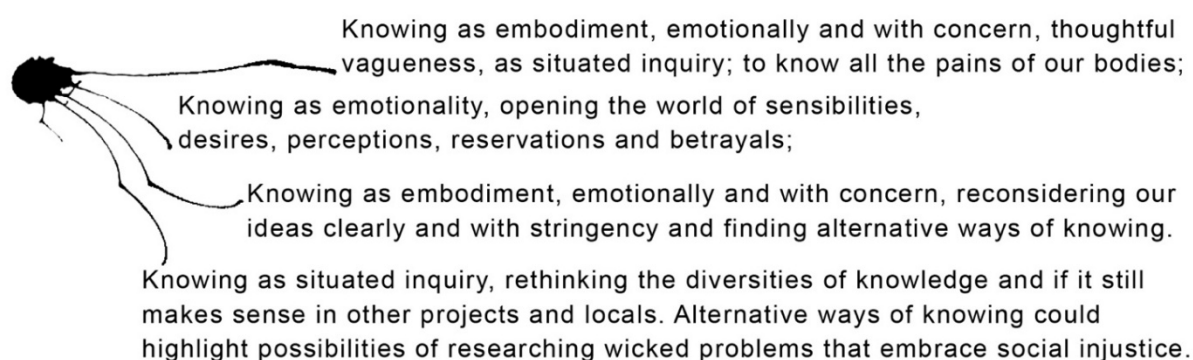


**Figure 3-2: Author's artistic expression of the possibilities of knowing.**

The artistic methods explored in this study encouraged collaboration and sharing, and presented very subtle and situated knowledge about belonging. Belonging is frequently – though not always or only – related to personal experience and emotions (Hiltunen *et al.*, 2020). These insights support Eisner's (2008) recommendation that art should perhaps be regarded as a way of knowing rather than a form of knowledge (Hiltunen *et al.*, 2020). They

indicate that it is possible to create multiple ways of knowing belonging through artistic practice and suggest that these ways of knowing are an important supplement to scientific research on belonging.

Situated living inquiry can be regarded as a living practice of art-making, research, and teaching (Springgay *et al.*, 2005). They further base their view of meaning-making on Rose's (2007) argument that the process is inextricably connected to an awareness and understanding of art.

#### *3.2.2.7 Philosophical conclusion*

The ontological stance of this study considers the context and how persons make sense of their lived world and is therefore based on a subjectivist stance (ontology *in situ*). This study is epistemologically situated within the interpretive paradigm, as it makes meaning from the researcher's experiences with NEET youth and substance users and how they make sense of engaging with the creative processes within compromised contexts.

It considers multiple realities that are socially constructed to represent the meaning-making of the researcher and participants regarding how they experience their lived situation and their participation in the creative process sessions. In summary, the study assumes an ontological stance of idealism with many truths, where reality is both a social construction and a projection of human imagination through the creative process. Facts are viewed as dependent on the observer as they socially construct meaning from their observations and derived findings.

I gain insights based on how the NEET participants and persons with a substance addiction attach meaning to their lived experiences through their involvement in the co-creation processes.

Next, the research strategies selected for this study are discussed.

### **3.3 Research strategies orientation**

For this study, I employ three research strategies, which embrace Arts-based Research (ABR), Interpretive Phenomenology, and Autoethnography through the lens of A/R/Tography.

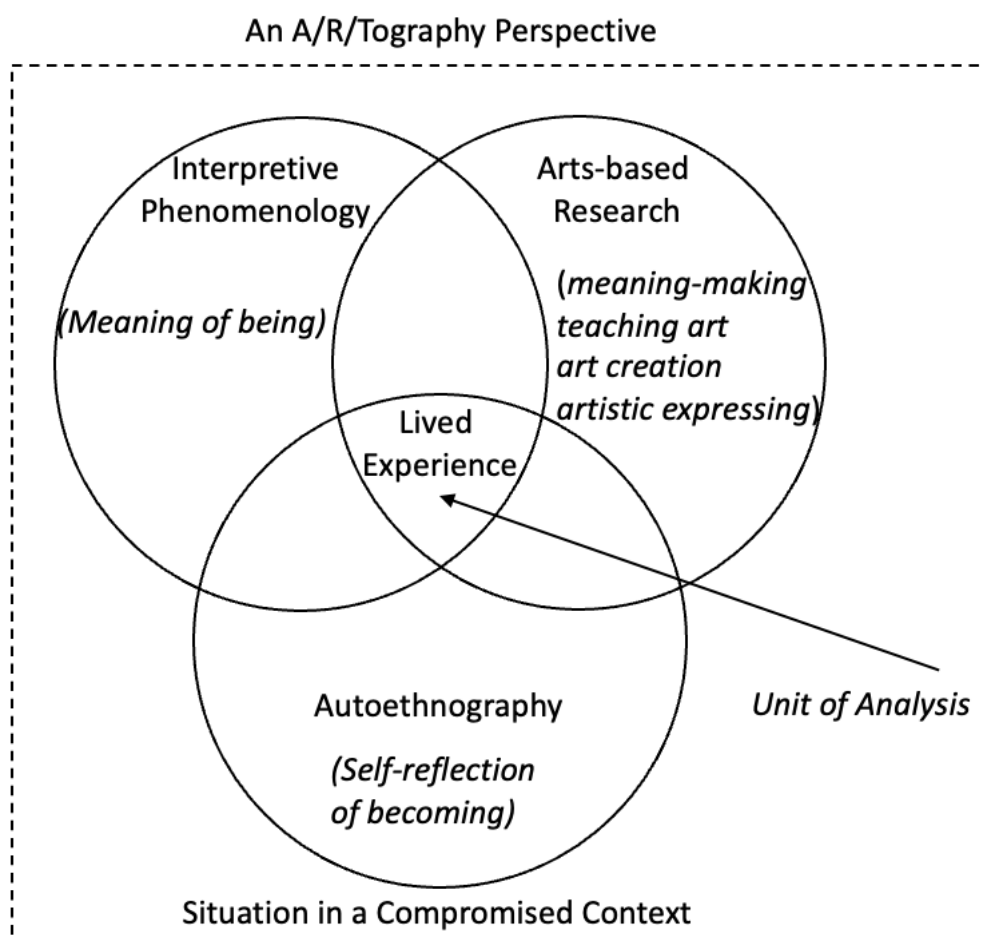


**Figure 3-3: Positioning the research strategies for this study around the lived experience as the unit of analysis – Figure 1.3 duplicated**

In Table 3.1, the three strategies are detailed concerning their focus, the researcher's standpoint, disciplinary roots, methods of data collection, data analysis, and how findings are communicated.

**Table 3-1: A summary of interpretive, ABR, and autoethnography strategies based on the related literature reviewed.**

|                     | <b>Interpretive phenomenology (Heidegger)</b>                                                                                   | <b>Arts-based Research</b>                                                                                                                                        | <b>Autoethnography</b>                                                                                         |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus               | What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon by an individual or by many individuals? | Integrate arts-practices and methods in the research process.                                                                                                     | Reflecting of one's own lived experience in the artist, researcher and teacher roles of situational situations |
| Researcher position | Researcher as a reflective interpreter                                                                                          | The researcher is both artist and researcher to facilitate art sessions based on their own experiences and practices as they interact with research participants. | situating a personal experience within the social context                                                      |

|                   |                                                                                               |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Discipline origin | Philosophy, Sociology, psychology                                                             | Arts and fine arts, qualitative research, social sciences                    | Autobiography and ethnography                                                                                                  |
| Data Collection   | Interview with up to 10 people; arts-based probes                                             | Creating art; arts-based interviews and dialogues, embodied activities, etc. | Reflections from diaries and journals; observations; artistic expressions                                                      |
| Data Analysis     | Meaning themes, general description of the experience; identify the essence of the phenomenon | Thematic analysis, aesthetic impressions, narrative analysis, etc.           | Thematic and content analysis; descriptive accounts self-reflection and introspection, narrative analysis, and interpretation. |
| Reporting         | Description of the essence of the experience                                                  | Research process explained as a narrative including artistic expressions.    | Narrative to explain personal experiences and insights                                                                         |

Below, the CARER depicts the three strategies in a nest that embodies form containing three eggs as a metaphor of enclosures containing each strategy and what lies within. It holds layers of woven research content for how this study unfolded.

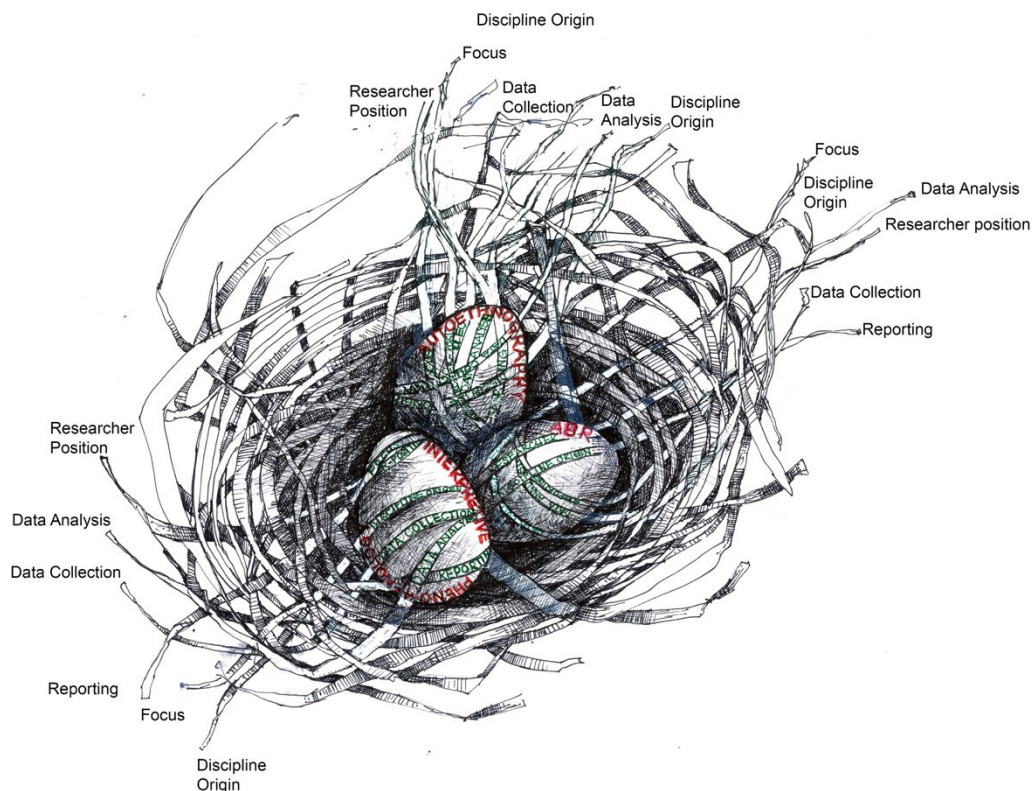


**Figure 3-4: Artistic expression of the three research strategies**

Next, an overview of the structure used to discuss each of the three strategies is: the discipline origin of the strategy; its focus as applied to this study; the researcher's position; data collection and analysis methods used; and finally, how the results will be presented.

### **3.3.1 Research strategy 1: Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a research approach that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019), and is regarded as "the meaning of being" (Horrigan-Kelly *et al.*, 2016). Meaning can be understood as the recollection of empathic engagement, hermeneutic suspicion, or the achievement of critical engagement to understand the lived experience of a person (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011).

Phenomenological research characteristically starts with concrete descriptions of lived situations, often first-person accounts, set down in everyday language and avoiding abstract terms (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011). An experience of a phenomenon is situated in a particular socio-cultural and geographic context and meaning is co-constructed by the person's own experience and the researcher's sense-making of that experience (Arena *et al.*, 2022). In their study they tried to understand how unemployed people cope as they deal with the challenges of the phenomenon of unemployment and how these influence their complex relationships with each other and their lived context. The phenomenon studied in this thesis is co-constructed by both the individual and the researcher. Thus, the researcher's personal history and lived experience cannot be bracketed when interpreting data, and there is a preference for reflexively acknowledging and remaining aware of one's personal perspective and influence throughout the qualitative analysis process.

A phenomenon, according to Heidegger, addresses the everyday engagement of things of the world managed by categories of being collectively identifying individual cultures. The philosophy of phenomenology was founded by German philosopher Edmund Husserl and together with his mentee, Heidegger created the framework to guide the research design of phenomenological studies (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019; Poulsen & Thøgersen, 2011).

Although phenomenology started as an initial common understanding, over time different schools of philosophy developed that determine the "how" and "what" of the lived experience. The main ones are transcendental (descriptive phenomenology) based on Edmund Husserl's view that phenomenology is the science of the essence of consciousness that can be discovered without basing these on any assumptions to inform the inquiry – he suggests a process of bracketing to achieve this. In this case the experience is described without trying to attach meaning to it. The second is hermeneutic (interpretive phenomenology) based on Martin Heidegger's views that actions and meanings can be interpreted in relation to the world

since people have the freedom to make choices based on the influences and conditions of their life-worlds. According to this school, foundations and processes are provided to interpret the lived experience. A third school is existential with the emphasis on embodied human experience and action as viewed by Merleau-Ponty and Paul Sartre (Charlick *et al.*, 2016; Neubauer *et al.*, 2019).

This study follows the interpretive phenomenology philosophy based on the assumption that the participants of the study experience their life worlds and the researcher makes sense of such *in situ* experiences by interpreting them from their perspective. Specifically, to interpret the lived experience of an individual's being and being-with-others in a lifeworld situation. It follows Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) proposed by Smith as applied by Frechette *et al.* (2020) amongst other researchers (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Smith, 2011; Eatough & Smith, 2017).

### 3.3.1.1 Interpretive phenomenological research (IPR)

Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek verb, *hermēneuein* ('to interpret'), and the noun *hermēneia* ('interpretation'), and its aim are 'to make meaning intelligible' Hermeneutics implies that novel understandings are created through the associations of the researcher's and the participant's horizons of significance (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Frechette *et al.*, 2020).

This association requires self-knowledge on the part of the researcher, an openness to others that can be nurtured through reflexivity. Smith (2011) describes interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) as qualitative research informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011). IPA is concerned with people's experiences, understandings, and how they find themselves-in-the-world (Boden, Larkin & Lyer, 2019; Horrigan-Kelly *et al.*, 2016).

IPA is also interpretive in recognising the role of the researcher in making sense of the experience of participants (Shinebourne & Smith, 2009). Shinebourne and Smith (2009) suggest that qualitative approaches such as IPA can make a valuable contribution to furthering our understanding of experience and its meaning. IPA is also influenced by symbolic interactionism with its concern for how meanings are constructed by individuals within both their social and their personal worlds (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Shinebourne & Smith, 2011).

The nature of interpretive phenomenology indicates that, according to van Manen, the researcher cannot become separate from the situation to then capture experiences as text (Creswell, 2007). The researcher must decide how and in what way personal understandings will be introduced into the study (Creswell, 2007).



Lindseth and Norberg (2022) articulate that phenomenological hermeneutics relates to our participation in the phenomenon's meaning as it flourishes in time. The researcher must decide how and in what way the personal understandings will be introduced into the study (Creswell, 2007). Smith *et al.* (2009) contend that individuals can offer a unique perspective on their engagement with phenomena; therefore, for researchers, individuals can become the unit of study (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011).

The researcher's interpretive phenomenological stance is reflexive and is probably the first and foremost consideration in qualitative research (O'Brien *et al.*, 2014; Tong *et al.*, 2007; Frechette *et al.*, 2020). Individuals have the capacity to think and comprehend their actions which leads to understanding (empathy) as human actions are meaningful, and their realities consist of people's subjective experiences. Therefore, an intersubjective epistemology and an ontological belief that reality is socially constructed are assumed (Walla, 2015).

This study focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and its methodology can be used to explore how IPA derives these theoretical approaches to inform its distinctive epistemological framework (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011). IPA is an approach aimed at providing nuanced insights into the lived experience of the phenomenon through the personal experiences of participants and their personal perceptions of objects and events (Tuffour, 2017).

### *3.3.1.2 Interpretive phenomenology and visual art*

Innovative ways are required to develop experience-near within a phenomenological paradigm. In this study, I explore why and how visual methods can be incorporated, primarily employing drawing and printmaking. Some recent articles with a phenomenological emphasis highlight the use of visual methods (Attard, Larkin, Boden & Jackson, 2017; Boden & Eatough, 2014; Shinebourne & Smith, 2011; Boden *et al.*, 2019).

Visual materials can appeal to lived experience, reducing people's participation in discussing their views and experiences and thus overcoming the limitations of verbal communication (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Martikainen, 2019). This is mainly related to the interpretation of visual products created by participants. Researchers question whether meaning can be accessed by only "seeing" the visual representation only and suggest that to understand participants' lived experiences, participants must discuss their work (Martikainen, 2019; Mitchell *et al.*, 2011).

The combination of an interpretive research approach and the visual aspect of lived experience expression, provides a sound methodology for this study. In this manner, the visual aspect also amplifies unheard voices that are often absent/missing in research (Martikainen, 2019).

Data on lived phenomenological experience can be gathered in various ways to describe experiences. The intention was to describe my own and the participants' experiences by using reflective journaling together with my creative expressions through printmaking. As mentioned earlier, to achieve this, I have kept a personal journal to capture my feelings, reflections, and knowledge regarding my research work. A final reflection on my artwork will follow in Chapter 4 and will be discussed comprehensively, including coverage of my reflexive self (Yin, 2011). I analyse the narrative and reflexive data by developing themes.

### *3.3.1.3 Quality of interpretive phenomenological studies*

The validity and quality assessment of the interpretive phenomenology strategy was based on the suggestions of Nizza *et al.* (2021), Goldman (2006), and Shinebourne (2011). The following quality aspects were considered: to construct a compelling and unfolding narrative of the researcher and participants' lived experience accounts, to present an experiential account of the experience as influenced by the phenomenon investigated and the challenges encountered. This was achieved through careful reading of the reflection data, focusing on divergence and convergence (Goldman, 2006; Nizza *et al.*, 2021). Other quality aspects, also associated with qualitative research, include context-sensitive descriptions that include the identification and recruitment of the target group; being transparent and providing a coherent description of the study and its methods to indicate the importance of the findings (Shinebourne, 2011). For coherence, the alignment between the research problem, aim, questions, and methodology is assessed once all the data have been analysed.

### **3.3.2 Research strategy 2: Arts-Based Research (ABR)**

Arts-based research was the selected strategy to incorporate creative processes and find answers to the second research question, namely, *"How can the in-situ interactions between the researcher as artist and research participants during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills?"* Arts-based research enables participants to create and interpret art as they explore and reflect on their lived experiences through a creative process with the new creative skills gained.

#### *3.3.2.1 Introduction to ABR*

The rapid growth of literature in ABR has opened new ways of thinking about how art links to novel research knowledge. It enables us to deepen our thinking on ABR and explore the characteristics of thought, perception, and experience (Visse, *et al.*, 2019). Being open and responsive to the movement of artworks that ABR generates, and being receptive to activity, phenomena or life itself form the essence of ABR (Visse *et al.*, 2019). Working with ABR, one needs to fully engage with the experience of mystery and immerse themselves in the mysterious nature of our practice and the phenomenon that it leans towards (Visse *et al.*,

2019). Hence, ABR responds well to the unexpected that requires the researcher to trust the process (McNiff, 2008; Visse *et al.*, 2019).

Arts may enable research participants not only to become open and confident about their own experiences but to embrace other participants' points of view, make connections with the feelings and thoughts of other people, and better understand social matters from other participants' perspectives (Martikainen, 2019). The reason is that insights are often gained when a person is confronted by unexpected results that may surprise them.

The emergence of new ideas supports open-mindedness and also provides the participants with the opportunity to understand social encounters differently (Martikainen, 2019). ABR reduces power-relations between researchers and participants since it facilitates more democratic participation which was earlier pointed out by Coemans *et al.* (2015).

Notably, ABR is based on the tradition of qualitative social sciences and encompasses the use of any form of art at any point in the research process to generate, interpret and/or communicate knowledge (Denzin *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, Denzin *et al.* highlight that ABR researchers create new research tools rather than discovering them. The heart of ABR includes a literature review linked to the guiding principles of qualitative research (Watson, 2020). Utilising ABR as an inquiry should comprise all qualities needed for traditional research (Watson, 2020).

### 3.3.2.2 ABR versus language-based research

In ABR it is possible to go beyond using traditional interviews to collect data and use creative processes, such as printmaking, body mapping, narrative accounts, etc. (Coemans & Hannes, 2017). These practices involve individuals in artistic activities and show aesthetic and design qualities. Although Sullivan (2006) states that the relationship with knowledge underpins ideas that are central to doing ABR, the philosophical and aesthetic underpinnings are, however, seldom explained in depth (Visse *et al.*, 2019).

The ABR process is explored and focuses on the iterative relationships between the event, context, participants, and researchers through creative practices (Visse *et al.*, 2019). The most prominent feature of ABR is that it engages with aesthetic qualities to uncover novel situations and experiences (O'Donoghue 2009).

Researchers ask if art could provide insights by not only focusing on participants' intellectual skills but also their emotional states. ABR is well-suited to understanding one's lived experiences (Lopez *et al.*, 2018; Martikainen, 2019). Additional holistic insights into people's experiences and thoughts, and increasing participants' awareness, can be better achieved than verbal or text-based research methods, (Martikainen, 2019).

### 3.3.2.3 ABR and visual art

Just before the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social science research began noting increased use of visual materials as a qualitative approach in social sciences to expand understanding of human experiences and social phenomena (Banks, 2001; Martikainen 2019; Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018). Visual arts-based research methods in social science research provide researchers with means to use visual materials that best meet the purposes of their studies (Morris & Paris, 2022). Visual ABR methods are multi-modal, combining visual materials and their verbal reflections to capture abstract ideas and experiences that are difficult to verbalise (Martikainen, 2019).

In this regard, ABR has the potential to diminish the divide between arts and social sciences and to provide an insightful basis for interdisciplinary research. It is essential to reflect on visual material to enable communication between the researcher–artist and participants and to add to their tacit knowledge (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). Images and other visual materials invite participation, gatherings, discussions, and sharing opinions, views, and experiences (Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018; Martikainen, 2019). However, the conceptualisation of this type of research remains challenging (Wang, *et al.*, 2017).

Another consideration is that one needs to be cautious about interpreting visual images, because these do not merely depend on the method (Lichtman, 2002) but also on the interpretation of the viewer. One should rather look at presentations using positive and negative emotions such as pleasure, wonder, fear, or revulsion, when using arts-based research methods to persuade the viewer, keeping in mind suppressing the researcher's own passion without deadening it (Joffe, 2008; Lichtman, 2002).

Three ABR approaches are possible, namely: firstly, art can be used as a basis for producing and collecting research material (Martikainen, 2019). Because of the physicality and tangibility of visual art, images are found to provide an effective platform for discussion. Secondly, visual images can function as the research material either alone or supplemented by the participant's own voice (Mitchell *et al.*, 2011; Martikainen, 2019). Research questions can be answered by utilising creative and arts-based research methods, which can add value by producing rich data from visual images (Cohenmiller, 2018; Dunn & Mellor, 2017; Franz, 2010; Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018). Expressive and creative data conveys artistic ways of meaning-making and understanding in qualitative research (Berman, 2017; Watson, 2020). Researchers may therefore obtain a more holistic insight into people's experiences and opinions than by using mere verbal research methods. Coemans *et al.* (2017) believe that in this way researchers can also address power relations in research processes. Thirdly, visual materials can also be used to summarise and present research findings, which hopefully will make the findings

clearer and more understandable to a broader audience. Visual materials may similarly be used when organising research and outlining research tasks (Martikainen, 2019).

Creative and arts-based research methods may therefore be suitable for participatory community-based research, especially when engaging with people who may have lower levels of literacy. ABR could reach youth in underserved settings whose voices are often marginalised and their perspectives frequently absent in research (Martikainen, 2019). Being aware of such practical research possibilities as a foundation for positioning one's actions could lead to the experience of support and empowerment for the participants (Martikainen, 2019).

ABR acknowledges the multiple dimensions that constitute and form the human, namely, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and cultural. In addition, there are also a myriad of ways that humans engage in the world – oral, literate, visual, and embodied (Leavy, 2015;2018). It should then be possible to connect the work of the researcher with the lives of humans through research that is accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, and provocative and that also appeals to emotions and lived experiences (Martikainen, 2019). During the ABR research process, fluid practices (praxis) in diverse forms of knowledge through art emerge and are open to change by creative, critical, and reflexive processes (Martikainen, 2019).

Through the workshop stages of my research, I gained multifaceted knowledge, with each workshop phase, other facets of specific areas emerged. It helped me to understand significant emerging themes from the participatory research project with participants from the two cases (Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018).

In this study, visual arts are the selected art form for the ABR strategy that will be discussed next.

#### *3.3.2.4 ABR and participation*

Leavy (2018) reminds us that it is important for participants to act as guides to their own lives and experiences so they can indicate what is important from their own perspective. Ethically, researchers must ensure that participants have the freedom to express themselves and understand that their input is important and valued.

Even though ABR reduces the established authority between researcher-artists and participants, there remains a need to allow for more democratic participation (Goopy & Kassan, 2019; Leavy, 2018; Martikainen, 2019). ABR is a participatory process since participants are invited to share their thoughts and experiences (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Leavy, 2018; Martikainen, 2019). Morris and Paris (2022) agree with these authors that participant engagement can be enhanced through ABR.

Martikainen (2019) states that it is easier for some participants to express their ideas visually than verbally. Drawings arouse various sensory responses in an audience whose responses are critical when the research topic is multifaceted, experiential, and not easily expressed in words (Morris & Paris, 2022). Therefore, participants may need to express themselves in alternative ways (Martikainen, 2019). However, to address the transcription of visual and auditory aspects, areas of concern must be noted to best represent the authenticity and key aspects of interactions during collaborative, transparent, and reflective research practices (Morris & Paris, 2022).

Access to fundamental aspects of human experience like power and hope, which transform ABR, is essential for facilitating community inclusion in social investigation (Coemans *et al.*, 2015). Berman (2017) expresses that art intervention is not a constant linear sequence of looking, thinking, and acting. It frequently requires dialogue, action, and collaborative creation, reflection, revision, and repeating patterns at all stages. Beagle (2021) concurs with Berman and indicates that arts-based approaches cultivate embodied learning opportunities that acknowledge and include non-linear, bodily, intuitive, emotional, and symbolic dimensions and foster opportunities for greater co-creation of knowledge. Beagle (2021) suggests that these capacities can also be extended to promote “a sense of authoring through multimodal production”.

### *3.3.2.5 ABR design for this study*

For this research study, I adopted a participatory and co-creative approach consisting of various stages in which creative processes and ABR methods were used to map out my research and to summarise my research design. The participatory research project had three main aims.

The artistic methods employed in this research include exploring printmaking and drawing skills related to creative working processes, aiming to develop participants’ artistic expression through their developing skills. The dialogue between the practice of art and study commenced after the artistic process. Innovative, creative approaches and the artefacts created during the workshops were used for interpretation to gain insights (Mäkelä, 2007).

Through a participatory research project, the researcher can obtain a good understanding of the participants’ sense of place, their concerns, and become aware of the overall context in which the research participants exist (Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2019). In this way, research intervention will not undermine community structures, which can provide support.

Researchers in this field who employ ABR projects facilitate individuals in vulnerable populations to utilise creative and artistic methods to unlock potential capabilities (Coemans *et al.*, 2015). Art is considered a vehicle for research findings in an exhibition of visual

representation or artefact. I have completed pilot workshops with my students using creative processes, employing printmaking as a technique to see what could be used during the research.

Secondly, I intend to make a positive contribution to the youth's thinking in the community. We have noted that most communities today are too tired of the many research activities conducted with their involvement, without them ever seeing benefit or even results. It is important to ensure that something concrete is left behind, e.g., workshop artefacts, forms, photos, etc. (Greeff & Rennie, 2016). This provides the participants with a sense of achievement. Van der Vaart *et al.* (2019) consider this as a form of '*giving back*' to the community, which is in line with the general aim of participatory research practices, to benefit the community research participants.

Thirdly, I reflected on the pilot workshops with the youth in the underserved setting. By reflecting in and on practice together with the youth and the community, the insights gained through reflection informed the succeeding creative workshops in the underserved setting.

This type of research aims to assist my research in navigating creatively through my study and practical outputs (Watson, 2020). Creative works or texts operate alongside creative practice. As ABR within my A/R/Tography focus, I engaged in art-making throughout the art process by myself or by participants (Watson, 2020). ABR methods have been employed as outcomes of accounts of a phenomenon (Coemans *et al.*, 2015).

ABR methods were advantageous within my study because:

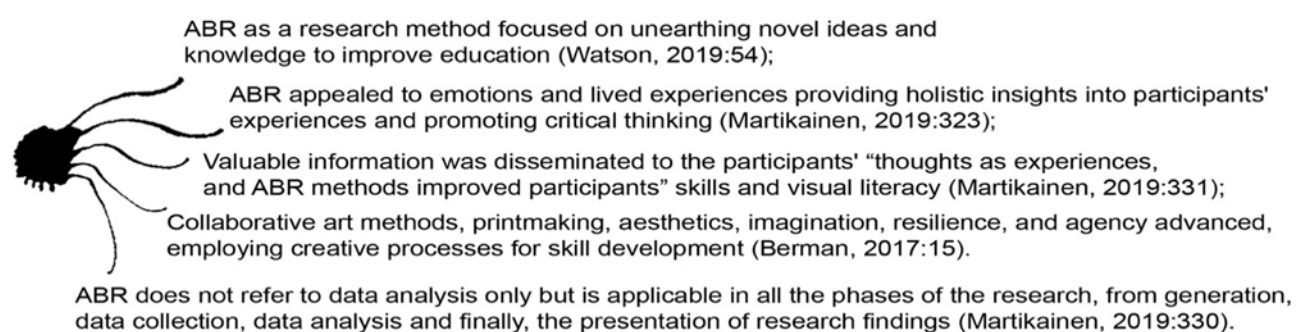


**Figure 3-5: Advantages of ABR methods**

ABR worked well with participatory approaches, mainly when participants engaged with creative work and documentation (Watson, 2020), emphasising that attention is placed on connections through strengthening the individual voice and creating equal opportunities. Giving voice to participants and encouraging them to tell stories leads to mystery and insights into feelings. Taking risks and acting passionately leads to mistakes that produce creative solutions (Berman, 2017). Participants' art-making was used for analysis. They were

encouraged to create and express themselves freely to create opportunities for self-interaction and collaboration for learning (Watson, 2020).

In the context of this study, I use the term researcher–artist to refer to qualitative researchers using artistically inspired methods or approaches. Researcher–artists integrate research components into their creative processes or investigator profiles in which qualitative researcher and artist roles are fully blended (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

My analysis focuses on the participation of substance users. Data includes participant observation, video recordings, focus groups, and photographs, which were analysed thematically (Hystad & Wangensteen, 2021; Narayanan & Murphy, 2023). The works show deeper engagement with research findings, participant narratives, and additional details that interpret the main themes (Morris & Paris, 2022). Reflection and the application of a practice-led approach are deeply grounded and fundamental to my research process. Rose’s self-reflexive approach is very beneficial (Géring, 2017).

In sub-sections 3.7 (data collection) and 3.8 (data analysis), I describe each stage of the participatory research project in more detail.

#### *3.3.2.6 Arts-based research limitations*

Clark and Morris (2017) and Martikainen (2019:334) indicate that current literature on ABR presents analytical considerations and identifies limitations. Limitations associated with ABR are mainly related to the interpretation of visual products created by participants and influenced by various challenges and issues experienced in practice (Clark & Morris, 2017; Martikainen, 2019; McNiff, 2011).

ABR artists, who utilise artistic processes and practices to communicate their research outcomes, may experience a perceived tension between artistic expressions and traditional research methods (O’Donoghue, 2009). There seems to be a lack of methodological reflection. Authors noted that it could be interesting if more ABR researchers report their own experiences as a researcher in the roles of artist and researcher (Coemans & Hannes, 2017). In addition, consider the teacher role in A/R/Tography, and how these three roles change during the study, by balancing them, or how one role influences the other roles.

Martikainen (2019) warns that visual images alone do not convey participants’ lives and experiences; hence, participants should be required to discuss and explain their images. Essentially, the participants guide the audience when they reflect on their images, principally becoming research partners themselves rather than objects of research (Martikainen, 2019). This confirms the views of Bergold and Thomas (2012) to treat research partners not as objects of research but as co-researchers.



Another critique is the relationship between visual and verbal modes. It is easier for some participants to express their ideas visually than through oral means (Martikainen, 2019). McNiff (2011) cautions that the affirmation of bodily and sensory knowing through the arts can be challenging to conceptualise and verbally describing outcomes may be difficult. For this reason, it is essential that participants can express themselves in alternative ways (Martikainen, 2019). There seems to be a gap and a wide lack of compatibility between visual and verbal forms of expression, hence some research suggests that it requires intentional reflection (Martikainen, 2019).

Further discussions amongst researchers about the capacity of visual materials in ABR to address emotions, memories, and lived experiences are questioned when participants generate experiences and memories by using creative processes and visual materials that might be painful (Martikainen, 2019). Researcher–artists may then not be able to sufficiently attach meaning to the data. This situation may also cause an ethical dilemma where the research itself causes the participant to be in a state of discomfort or even trauma.

My approach to ABR is visually oriented; it is beyond the scope of this study to review ABR in all fields of social sciences. Regardless of these limitations, the data, based on modern and recent ABR literature, suggests that studies of visual ABR in social sciences may inspire social science researchers to explore ABR in depth (Martikainen, 2019).

Ethical issues relating to using arts-based methods pose new ethical challenges in conducting research. Some of these ethical concerns were identified in this review: e.g. anonymity versus presenting participants' work as theirs; ownership, although the creator should be the owner, the outcome of the creative activity is the result of a research activity and as such part of the research data; the issue of representation in terms of stereotyping or being stigmatised by revealing themselves in a less favourable manner; and dealing with emotions that are caused by the artist expressions (Coemans & Hannes, 2017).

These limitations discussed above provide an opportunity to make suggestions to address this criticism. As a result, researchers must provide comprehensive information about the creative process and the reasons for material selection and carefully capture reflections on the process (Martikainen, 2019).

### *3.3.2.7 ABR quality and conclusion*

Not only do we need research methods that foster our responsibility for and appreciation of people, but researchers' commitment and interests should be to engage not only empathetically, but also positively, in the lives of the research participants (Von Benzon & Van Blerk, 2017). Martikainen (2019) is an advocate for ABR because it can facilitate participation, promote collaboration, encourage reflection, and generate empathy.

Arts-based social science research could lead the way for this kind of more comprehensive, responsible, accepting, and sustainable future (Martikainen, 2019). ABR is comprehensive, with researcher–artists participating in creative processes to effectively understand human capabilities and phenomena as they occur (Heinrichs, 2021). Recent research argues that observing and reflecting on visual images produce meaningful insights into issues related to social interaction and play a role in various social functions and contexts (Martikainen & Hakoköngäs, 2023).

With its ability to facilitate participation, promote collaborative reflection and generate empathy, arts-based research could pave the way for this more inclusive, responsible, tolerant, and sustainable future (Martikainen, 2019). Qualitative research in the arts advances another possibility of presenting knowledge and experience if ABR can develop guidelines that do not contradict traditional social research. Researchers are steering away from the presumptuous understanding of singular truths and are instead exploring multiple experiences and meanings through narratives (Visse *et al.*, 2019).

ABR and its research contributions are novel. Although there is substantial literature and a broad scope of research topics, this research only presents a small slice of the entire field of ABR in social sciences. Some studies propose that the gap between visual expression and verbal modes of expression initiates reflection (Martikainen, 2019).

There is a need to evaluate the processes of ABR and the potential impact on the target group who are part of the study. There seems to be a gap regarding the parameters needed to evaluate the validity, reliability, and generalisability of ABR quality (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). They further remind researchers to consider credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. They suggest the Guiding ABR Assessment (GABRA) meta-framework, developed by Lafrenière and Cox (2013), as suitable for evaluating ABR.

This framework includes the normative, substantive, and performative criteria (Lafrenière & Cox, 2013) depicted in Figure 3.6.

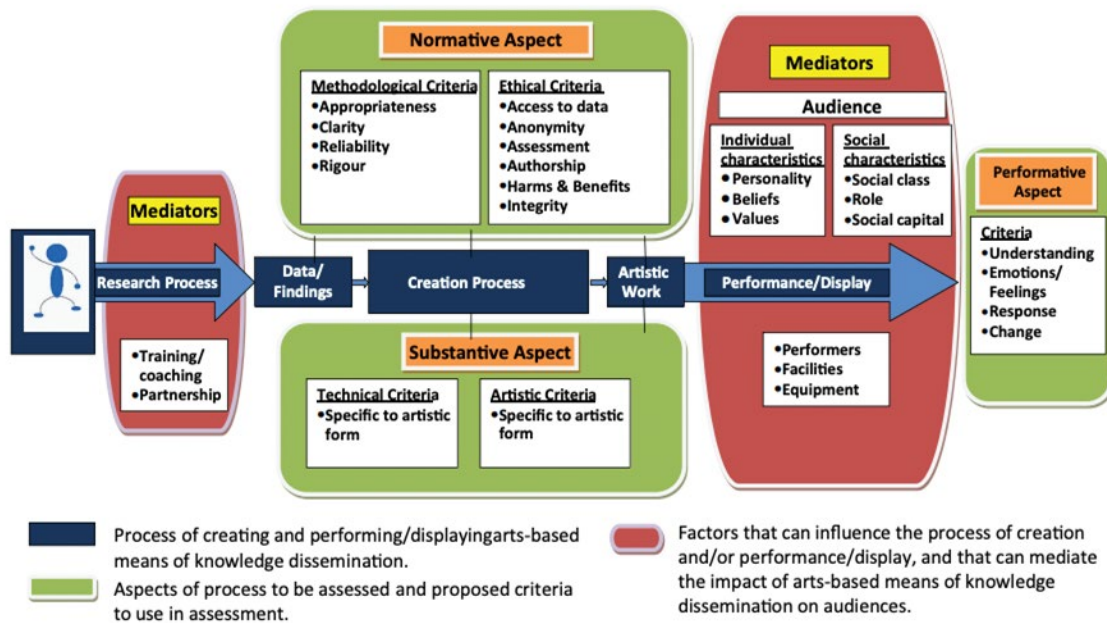


**Figure 3-6: Guiding ABR Assessment (GABRA) meta-framework by Lafrenière and Cox (2013)**

It is important to note that ABR should not compromise scientific or artistic rigour, and therefore the research methodology and design, as well as the creative process, need to have value given their fluid and dynamic nature (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). The quality of the artwork is evaluated according to its expression of some aspect of the lived experience and not in terms of its visual merit. Within the framework, the quality of the creative processes is considered based on the data and findings in terms of normative (methodological and ethical criteria) and substantive (technical and artistic criteria) aspects. The display process of the artistic expressions considers mediating factors (the audience's individual and social characteristics) and the available facilities and equipment, in relation to outcomes such as understanding, emotions/ feelings, responses, and change.

### 3.3.3 Research strategy 3: Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that has gained popularity in recent years (Anderson, 2006; Bishop, 2021; Edwards, 2021). It is an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Méndez, 2013). However, for a study to be considered a good autoethnography, Adams and Herrmann (2023) argue that each of the “auto”, “-ethno-”, and “graphy” has to be present. The “auto” part deals with the researcher's reflection on her own decisions and experiences during the research process in an authentic voice. The “-ethno-” part deals with the cultural aspects and how these aspects influence the decisions and experiences. In this study, the culture refers to the university's culture. Finally, the “graphy” aspect deals with the practice of engaging in the selected research processes and sharing and representing these through different

presentations and varied techniques (Herrmann, 2022). In this study, the “graphy” aspect was drawn from an A/R/Tography perspective.

There are different types of autoethnography, such as analytical, collaborative, critical, evocative, indigenous, impressionistic, interpretive, performative, phenomenological, poetic, or psychoanalytical, etc. (Sparkes, 2021). Autoethnographies are used differently (Tarisayi, 2023) and in this study, an interpretive-humanistic autoethnography orientation was chosen from the different types of autoethnography studies as mentioned by Sparkes (2021). This allows for more freedom in terms of reflective writing without the usual conventions of social-scientific writing.

### 3.3.3.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography allows researchers to use their own experiences and feelings as a central epistemic tool in their research (Ploder & Stadlbauer, 2016). It is grounded in postmodern philosophy and is linked to the ongoing debate about reflexivity and voice in social research (Wall, 2006). Autoethnography texts are constructed as a detailed description of a situation as experienced by the researcher, revealing personal biases and other factors that may influence the description of the situation, as well as an account of highlights, challenges, and memorable moments encountered (Van Oorschot *et al.*, 2022).

Autoethnography is based on reflections of the self and experiences related to a life event and is situated in and influenced by the context (Edwards, 2021). Edwards further indicates that autoethnography is both a process and an outcome and, although focusing on the self-experience, it is also in relation to others. Bishop (2021) reminds the autoethnographer to consider the following questions: “Who or what do I speak for?”; “Whose stories and knowledge may be shared?”; and “Who is the audience?” An autoethnographer typically includes details about the people involved, practices, culture, and influences (Edwards, 2021).

Chang (2016) warns against self-indulgent introspection in autoethnography, which tends to alienate the reader from the cultural interaction taking place. She argues that autoethnography has three orientations, namely its methodology, cultural interpretation, and its autobiographical content (Pitard, 2016). It is also important to consider the ethics of self to provide an authentic account of the experiences to allow the author’s voice to be heard (Edwards, 2021).

The theoretical foundation of autoethnography is phenomenology in attaching meaning to experiences and emotions (Tarisayi, 2023). One of the key advantages of autoethnography is its ability to provide a phenomenological understanding of lived experiences (Pitard, 2016). It also links the researcher’s lived experience to a specific culture within the context of the study. By using personal narratives and reflections, autoethnography allows researchers to explore the subjective and embodied aspects of human experiences (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). It provides a

unique perspective that goes beyond traditional research methods and allows for a deeper understanding of complex phenomena (Tarisayi, 2023). It allows researchers to explore anomalous and difficult-to-investigate aspects of the lived experience and to delve into subjective experiences that may be challenging to capture using traditional research (Maraldi *et al.*, 2020). This is possible through an internal self-reflection and sense-making process expressed with thick descriptions to compel others to want to learn more about the experience and resonate with it. Starr (2014) asserts that engaging in autoethnography through the lens of phenomenology enhances our understanding of the delicate yet significant peripheries that emerge in diverse contexts, rendering them more permeable and accessible.

The choice to use both text as a narrative and visual expressions provides for richer reflexivity of the author's values and perceptions (Koopman *et al.*, 2020). It also promotes the visibility of the research perspectives. Williams (2022), in her autoethnography account of her PhD journey, used a metaphor as a model of things to conceptualise her reality. The metaphor links something concrete that one can associate with, with something else that may be more abstract. This helped her to frame her experience within a specific cultural context to consider all the different influences.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and criticisms of autoethnography. Some argue that autoethnography lacks objectivity and rigour, as it relies heavily on the researcher's subjective perspective (Méndez, 2013). Others raise ethical concerns about the potential for self-indulgence and self-promotion in autoethnographic research (Lapadat, 2017).

These criticisms highlight the need for researchers to approach autoethnography with reflexivity and critical self-awareness (Wall, 2006). While it should be acknowledged that the retelling of these stories has altered the pre-reflective experience simply through putting the experience into words, care should be taken with how closely anecdotes attempt to transport the author to the pre-reflective moment of happening. Vignettes are used in this study to present a record of how I made sense of what happened, in my roles as artist-researcher-teacher, as suggested by Pitard (2016).

### *3.3.3.2 Autoethnography quality and conclusion*

In conclusion, the autoethnography used in this study is explained, after which the quality criteria to assess the autoethnographic part of the study are provided.

The autoethnography part of this study is presented in Chapter 4, where I reflect on my experience as an artist, through my artwork, on my experiences as a teacher during the workshops, and as a researcher, to present a scientific narrative. This helped me understand the shift of my identity from being an artist to becoming an artist, teacher, and eventually becoming an (a-r-t as in A/R/Tography). My focus was on my lived experience, and I used the

metaphor of a nest to illustrate my emotions and experiences. I used both text to narrate my reflections and artwork to express my experiences artistically. This research strategy was selected to provide an opportunity to reflect on my PhD journey, which was characterised by many challenges associated with complex contexts, topics, and environmental factors. The autoethnography provides insights into the life of a PhD candidate within the university culture as well as reflections on the data collection challenges experienced when engaging with the two target groups (NEET youth and substance-dependant individuals).

In addition, my PhD journey stretched over a period that includes the pandemic, as well as pre- and post-pandemic. I had to navigate between approaches, strategies, methods, participant selection, and cases. In virtual participations during the pandemic, NEET youth in underserved settings were taught creative processes focusing on printmaking techniques. The second case was face-to-face with individuals with a substance-abuse problem in a rehabilitation facility, also in a compromised context.

Due to the flexible nature of autoethnography, it is difficult to compile a list of quality criteria that remains open-ended, as the context, purpose, and nature of research studies may differ. Quality criteria are identified during the actual inquiry process in the research and during the writing of the autoethnography account and not prior to, or outside, the study (Sparkes, 2021).

Possible quality criteria could be subjectivity as the researcher attempts to gain an understanding, critical self-reflexivity about the role and involvement in the research, resonance to allow the reader to connect to the research experience, credibility by providing evidence to support the reflections, and contribution by extending knowledge of the experience and methodological insights (Sparkes, 2021). These need to conform to social science publishing conventions (Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

The following aspects are considered to assess the quality of this study (Le Roux, 2016), also mentioned by Sparkes (2021): subjectivity (making the “self” visible with the narrative constructed); self-reflexivity (emotions, experiences, and role of the researcher in the study); resonance (to allow the reader to connect emotionally and intellectually with the lived experience of the researcher as the author); credibility (to provide an honest, trustworthy, and authentic account of the lived experience of the researcher); and contribution (to share, inform, and inspire others in similar situations as well as contributing to the body of scientific knowledge).

### **3.4 Research strategy summary**

ABR holds opposing views from traditional research by applying visual art methods to create and interpret knowledge, highlighting creativity and expression. It engages participants actively in exploring complex themes through methods such as sustainable art-making

techniques and body mapping, but not without challenges. These include normalising artistic outputs and subjective interpretation that may not truly reflect the data. Despite these challenges, ABR enriches research by supporting diverse knowledge on novel ideas and participant engagement (Leavy, 2015; Smith & Conrad, 2015).

Phenomenology is a research strategy that concentrates on interpreting human experiences and perspectives. Specifically, interpretive phenomenology seeks to understand the subjective meanings people attribute to their lived experiences, aspiring to reveal their essence and structures. Applied to visual art, this approach explores how individuals perceive and interpret visual stimuli, providing deeper insights into the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of art. This enriches research by offering nuanced understandings of human consciousness and aesthetic appreciation (Finlay, 2009; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012).

Autoethnography merges autobiography and ethnography to explore personal experiences within cultural contexts. Researchers engage in their own experiences, using reflexive writing to consider and interpret these in relation to broader social and cultural phenomena. This approach values personal narrative as a scholarly inquiry method, offering insights into lived experiences often overlooked by traditional research methods. Autoethnography enriches research by providing rich, contextual interpretations that enlighten complexities of identity, culture, and social interactions (Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Chang, 2008).

Intertwining Interpretive Phenomenology and Autoethnography, as proposed within this research, holds considerable promise for enriching the practice of ABR (Starr, 2014). As a CARER, I firmly believe that autoethnography and phenomenology offer not only the means to access the lived experiences of individuals but also a way to connect with people on a deeper level, moving beyond the restraints of words on paper, as indicated by Starr (2014). I acknowledge that my roles as an (a-r-t) fuelled my exploration of ABR working with NEET youth and substance-dependent individuals' case contexts in compromised settings.

### 3.5 Research design

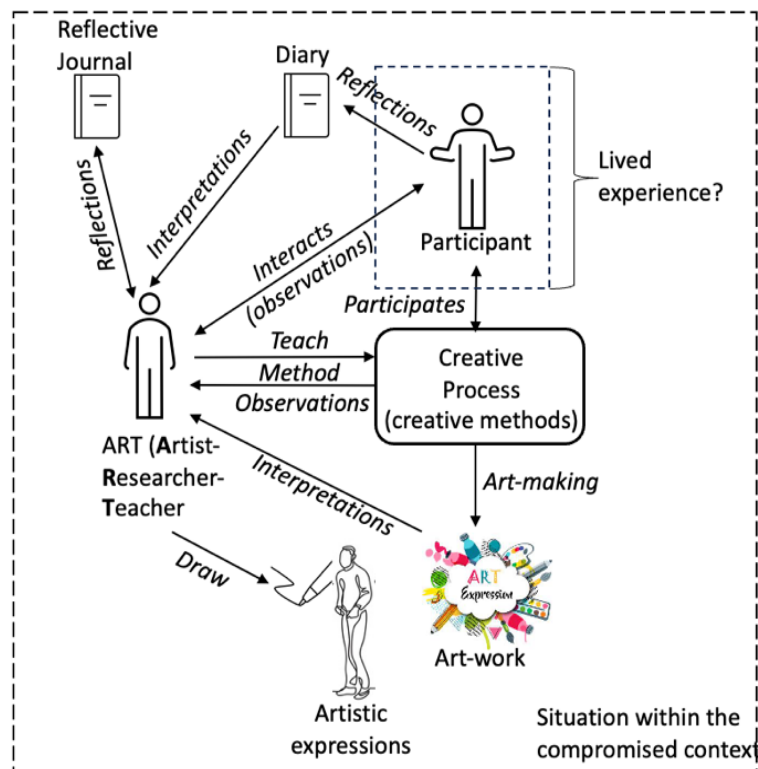


Figure 3-7: Conceptual framework with data sources added.

This figure represents the proposed conceptual framework that was introduced in Chapter 2, sub-section 2.9. In addition to the concepts, the data collection sources are indicated by showing the different activities, indicated by arrow connections. The reflective journal and diaries contain qualitative data in the form of reflections, added during and after the creative sessions, throughout the study. Data from the creative sessions is obtained through observations of the methods taught and reflections based on the participation in the workshops.

The key theoretical concepts for this study are the two human actors, the one the artist–researcher–teacher, and the other the participants who are situated in a compromised context. The lived experience of the participant, as experienced in their life worlds, is the focus of the study. This experience is influenced by factors typical of a compromised context, a focus on a specific phenomenon, and how these influences manifest in the person’s lived experience. The CARER engages with the participants in a creative space where creative processes are used to teach creative skills that the participants can use to express their lived experiences artistically. This then results in an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on her own lived experience and to contribute her artistic impressions.



### **3.5.1 Artist–researcher -teacher research process**

Reflection and the application of an arts-based approach from an A/R/Tography perspective to provide for my three roles is deeply grounded and fundamental to my research process. As previously mentioned, I resonate with Schön's established theory of reflective practice and Scrivener's developed reflective practice ideas (Cross, 2011) of exploring methods of co-creation to gain insights into the understanding of skills development as a means for reflecting and transforming current complex contexts. In my view, *in situ* co-creation and reflection provide the means to achieve the research aim and address the identified research problem.

Although these two diagrams both represent the same study, each is distinct in its expression, therefore incorporating the artist's role as part of conceptualising the study artistically in addition to the researcher's perspective.

### **3.5.2 Demonstration cases**

Two cases were used to demonstrate the application of the proposed research strategies. The reason for selecting the two cases was that the participants from the first case were no longer available to continue with the study. The first case was conducted during the pandemic, where strict lockdown regulations applied. The participants were also from an underserved context and faced with the effects of social ills that were aggravated during the pandemic – in the words of one participant, “I have a choice to die from hunger or from the virus”. In addition, the contact person who gave permission to conduct the study passed away. A second case was therefore identified to conclude the study. Both cases are used to demonstrate the application of the creative processes.

The first case was with NEET youth participants from an underserved context, and the creative sessions were conducted virtually. The second case was with persons with a substance dependency problem in a rehabilitation centre. Although the context there is not as severe as the first case, it can still be regarded as a compromised context.

The second case was with a group of substance-dependent individuals in a rehabilitation facility located in a rural town in the Western Cape province, South Africa. They were part of a drug rehabilitation programme. They stayed at the facility for the duration of the programme, three months before they were reintroduced into their communities. The creative workshops spanned five weekends, dedicated to printing techniques, body mapping activities, and reflections. I followed Gunn's (2017) toolkit that offers flexibility for the (a-r-t), enabling adaptation to my research needs, ensuring smooth exercise progression for authentic life accounts via body maps.

### 3.5.2.1 *The body drawing mapping process*

As part of the aim of the study, a method was developed to support participants in mapping their lived experiences and relationships by employing body mapping without imposing the need for standardisation or independence. The participants were regarded as experts in their own experience, and it was important to prevent unnecessary constraints on how the image should be produced (Boden *et al.*, 2019).

Throughout the draw-talk-draw-talk process, participant information sheets clearly requested participants to draw/diagram/body map their facts (Boden *et al.*, 2019).

The preamble should indicate a good supply of various art materials. Participants were supported in their safe space and continually reminded that their drawing skills were not being judged, and I reassured them that there were no right or wrong ways to approach the exercises.

It was helpful to informally explore the participants' relationship to creativity/arts/drawing prior, in reflection journals before introducing the body mapping task in detail.

All participants were encouraged to use the materials spontaneously, providing reassurance where needed. Each participant was guided individually through the mapping process to complete all the tasks. The participants had to represent themselves on the body map with the assistance of another participant. Struggling participants were guided by the researcher/artist during all stages of the mapping using the reflections they completed daily. After the participants completed their body maps, the researcher-artist prompted them to reflect on their experiences about what they had done and why in their reflection books. Participants were encouraged by the CARER to present their body maps in an informal setting (Boden *et al.*, 2019).

By utilising an 'expanded hermeneutic phenomenology' the body maps were analysed. I argue that the body mapping process can bring rich verbal data, but the images are worthy of analytic attention. Kirova and Emme (2006) cited in Boden *et al.* (2019), argue that research 'texts' should incorporate any relatable information, such as verbal, visual, and bodily data. Considering that all the data are valid forms of meaning, this presents innovative approaches for interpretation, making a case for an 'expanded hermeneutic phenomenology, revealing something that 'lies hidden' within the phenomenon yet constitutes its essential nature (Heidegger, 1962/1927, cited in Boden *et al.*, 2019).

Smith *et al.* (2009) term the interpretive process as 'detective work', which fully uncovers these deeper meanings that can apply equally to visual and verbal material. The interpretive process is a dialectical encounter between what the phenomenon can tell us and what we bring to it, and 'is neither fully one's own, nor is it another's alone' (Todres, 2007; Boden *et al.*, 2019).

Sense-making in the moment – how and when participants decide to include a specific relationship in a drawing – is a rich source of information about their experience of that relationship (Boden *et al.*, 2019).

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethical research can contribute to an understanding that ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process and is embedded in all aspects of my research. Qualitative researchers should constantly be conscious and reflect on incidents and ethical issues encountered in their studies to ensure discussion, analysis, and prevention of future mistakes (Orb & Eisenhauer, 2000). Research objectives, research questions, methods in artistic work, and collection of material involve ethical choices (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018).

The ethics application to conduct this study was approved by the Faculty and University Institutional ethics committees after some concerns raised were addressed. However, in practice, several ethical dilemmas occurred that required special ethical considerations that are flagged in the subsequent ethics sub-sections and described in the chapters reporting on the fieldwork.

Ethics applied in this study are discussed in general, followed by ethics in community-based research; ethics in creative studies; relational ethics; and ethics during the pandemic.

#### **3.6.1 Research ethics**

The growing interest in ethics in research has quite a strong focus on both the development and discussion of sets of principles, rules, and guidelines for the regulation of researcher conduct (UK Research Integrity Office, cited in Banks *et al.*, 2013), and on difficult decision-making and ethical dilemmas faced by researchers. These approaches to ethics could be categorised as ‘ethics as regulation’ and ‘ethics as decision-making’ (Banks *et al.*, 2013). Ethical research is deeply rooted in principles to protect participants’ rights and welfare, and their moral and human rights must be cared for (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). Ethical dilemmas could occur at all stages of research, and precautionary measures must always be in place, especially in research with vulnerable populations (Connolly & Reid, 2007; Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013).

This research adhered to ethical principles that appear across the ethical codes of research institutions and associations. These are:

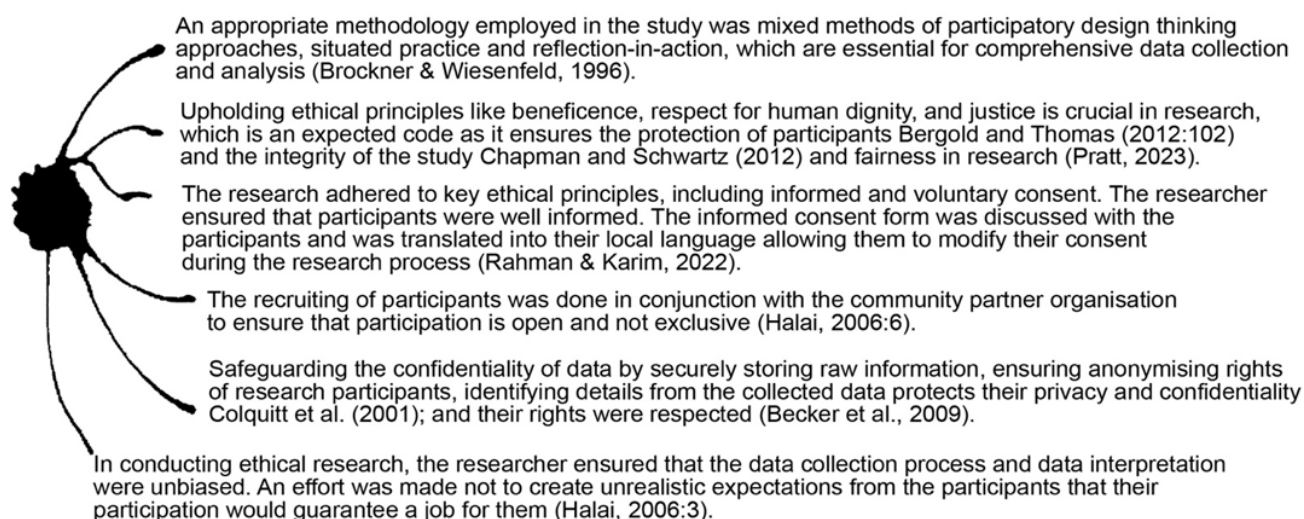


**Figure 3-8: Author's artistic expression of ethical principles.**

By integrating these ethical considerations into the research process, the study demonstrated a commitment to upholding ethical standards and respecting the rights and well-being of participants. The use of a robust methodology, coupled with a strong ethical framework, enhances the credibility and validity of the research findings, contributing to the overall quality and integrity of the study.

Ethical research can contribute to an understanding that ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process. Qualitative researchers should constantly be conscious and reflect on incidents and ethical issues encountered in their studies to ensure discussion, analysis, and prevention of future mistakes (Orb & Eisenhauer, 2000).

This is only possible if there is a shift away from a centralised compliance-focused approach to avoid governance practices that may prevent valuable research (Lyle *et al.*, 2023) or where the process has become too stringent (Ross & Cornbleet, 2003). Lyle *et al.* (2023) propose instead an “ethical preparedness” approach where not only the researchers but also the regulators and decision-makers have the skills to make morally appropriate decisions when confronted with ethical dilemmas in practice.

Often, ethical applications are considered based on the planned and envisaged research which may diverge from realities in the field, as in the case of the pandemic, which no regulatory board could have foreseen. The regulators may not be able to understand ethical considerations related to relational and everyday aspects of the lived experiences of the participants (Cascio & Racine, 2018). Participants may be willing to participate contrary to what gatekeepers may expect (Kay, 2019; McAreavey & Das, 2013).

Cascio and Racine (2018) propose a person-oriented research ethics approach with practical guidelines to consider: 1) respect for holistic personhood; 2) acknowledging the lived world;

3) individualisation; 4) focus on researcher-participant relations; and 5) empowerment in decision-making.

Art is directly related to resilience since it is participatory and comprehensive (Berman, 2017). Art builds relationships by sharing and learning within communities to appreciate diverse perspectives develop meaningful and relevant knowledge (Lawton & Storz, 2018). The regulatory ethical aspects, such as informed consent and anonymising of data could be seen as documenting the ethical aspect of the study, whereas the ethical issues should be navigated and handled by the researcher as these occur in practice (Cascio & Racine, 2018).

The regulatory approach requires awareness of, and conformity to, codified ethical rules on the part of researchers; whilst the decision-making approach is premised on the idea of researchers as active moral agents tackling conflicts between ethical principles (such as, 'do no harm' versus 'respect confidentiality'). This is often framed as dilemmatic choices between two courses of action that have equally unwelcome outcomes (Espedal *et al.*, 2023). Moral agents use moral reasoning characterised as "principle-based". For example, "Doing no harm" should reflect the principles and the ethical underpinning of a study (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013).

A pilot phase of a qualitative study involving a vulnerable population could be valuable in identifying ethical and methodological problems and managing them during phases of the research (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). There are no assurances that ethical dilemmas will not occur after the completion of a pilot study. During the research process, additional situations may be encountered, and some will only surface during the fieldwork (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013).

In such cases, the approaches and methods used may have to be revised to cater for the new situation (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). It is therefore important that researchers rely on their intuition informed by a value-driven moral reflection. They refer to collective-ethical sensemaking as a necessary process to involve the participants in any ethical decisions (Espedal *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, a pilot study before the primary research is useful to identify unforeseen problems (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013).

Gysels *et al.* (2008) similarly articulate that participants can decide whether to participate, and researchers should be sensitive and democratic (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Vulnerable populations may not be met and identified due to gatekeepers' overprotectiveness (Abbasi, 2016). Researchers could gain valuable insights, while an ethics committee may decide that such a group may be susceptible to harm due to the research (Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

Ethical care should not be generalised from one vulnerable group to another (Bracken-Roche *et al.*, 2017). Appropriate care for different groups of people should be researched and

designed to determine their needs (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). While building a body of knowledge from vulnerable groups, there is a need for balance to protect individuals from harm to improve their health and well-being (Alexander *et al.*, 2018; Rod *et al.*, 2023).

### **3.6.2 Ethics specific to participatory community-based research**

This study addresses the sensitive topic of unemployment with associated social ills and involves the participation of persons who can be regarded as vulnerable. It is typical of a community-based research participatory project (CBRP) and ethical considerations such as stigma, stereotyping, etc. in such situations will be guiding the project. The core of effective community practice is accountable governance that develops and sustains a community-led focus and vision (Henderson *et al.*, 2018).

During participatory community research, researchers are repeatedly required to manage sustainable ethically sound decisions that should apply in the community among the participants; how data should be collected, documented and interpreted so that they do not harm the participants and that their privacy is assured. The CARER observed ethical practice noting that a clinical psychologist was on standby at the rehabilitation Centre if participants required sessions while participating in the creative workshops and body mapping.

One of the principles of ethical research is beneficence or no harm to participants. Often, researchers have to balance ethical dilemmas experienced in the field with ethics requirements by using their own experience and value system to decide on suitable ethical practices (Greeff & Rennie, 2016).

Researchers often experience the phenomenon called “gatekeeping” when conducting research amongst vulnerable populations (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). Gatekeepers’ overprotective approach can marginalise vulnerable populations’ benefits gained from research considered to address their well-being. The authors believe that vulnerable people are willing to participate if the opportunity arises and they understand the aim of the research (Alexander *et al.*, 2018).

Frequently referred to as ‘vulnerable’ groups and sensitive topics include children, the elderly, substance-dependent users, refugees, criminal activity, and the list continues (Alexander *et al.*, 2018:86). Being female may also be regarded as vulnerable, especially in cultures where women are discriminated against because of sociocultural factors such as, e.g., unequal power relations with men, or where social norms affect their access to education or employment (Alexander *et al.*, 2018;; Boydell *et al.*, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2011).

An effort is made to ensure that the research activities do not create expectations of providing solutions for the problems experienced by the youth. This is done by including them in the

planning and by reminding them continuously of the workshop objectives and expected outcomes.

A decision was made to ensure that a concrete legacy remains in the form of the artwork/artefacts they have created (Greeff & Rennie, 2016). Each day has specific reflection activities to obtain feedback from the participants, to allow for an opportunity to share their experiences.

Sensitivity is required when cultural differences exist between the researcher and participants (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). At the same time, considerations must be implemented to assist participants immediately with their emotional needs, if necessary, especially when the methods used are causing participants to have an emotional response (Martikainen, 2019).

Participants should be referred for support when needed (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013). Researchers must be alert and aware when participants find it difficult to express their most painful experiences creatively or verbally, to carefully observe and guide participants. It may be necessary to focus on the positive aspects of participants' childhood experiences rather than the reflections that might be negative, such as, for example, when body maps are used as probes to learn more about the participants' lived experiences.

This project addresses the sensitive topic of unemployment with associated social ills and involves the participation of persons who can be regarded as vulnerable. The project is typical of a community-based research participative project (CBRP) and ethical considerations applicable in such situations will guide the project.

### **3.6.3 Ethics specific to creative processes**

It may be problematic when an artist descends on a community just to make art together with the community. Issues of ethical responsibility and the intentions of individual artists must also be addressed (Frimodig, 2016). I agree with Frimodig because the projected needs and perceived concerns of the project may suffer.

One can reflect and learn from Helguera's models of the arts in the social sphere, with examples of cross-disciplinary practices supported by theoretical debate, to understand how to approach the use of art-making within a community (Meschini, 2024). Using art requires different ways of thinking about ethics. The relationship with practice is different, requiring clarity about relationships and appropriate ethical behaviour (O'Donoghue et al., 2019).

Researchers are always connected to social networks, and we implicate people in our work (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Visual materials used in ABR have the capacity to address emotions, memories, and lived experiences.

The socio-economic and cultural background of the youth and community in the setting are challenging; some of their experiences and memories generated by visual materials may be painful (Boydell *et al.*, 2012; Martikainen, 2019).

It was noted that individuals who participated in the pilot creative workshops from the target group generally carry an emotional load due to their circumstances and the bleakness of their situation. From a research ethics point of view, researchers must always be aware of this. Research topics may be sensitive and producing visual materials or reflecting on them might burden participants (Martikainen, 2019). Therefore, researchers must have support structures in place to support participants when required.

Researchers working in the field of participatory research are especially held liable to address ethical questions. Participatory research, in my view, is about working closely together with research partners to share knowledge and experiences to reach a common goal. Researchers influence individuals within a community's values and attitudes or political views. All research reports and research processes must always be transparent. Researchers' intentions must be clarified. Participants should not be forced to participate. They can leave at any time (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018).

### 3.6.4 Relational ethics specific to autoethnography

Relational ethics are highlighted for researchers using autoethnography. Researchers in autoethnography always consider relational concerns, and this must remain central. To protect the privacy and safety of others, the integrity of the research is essential (Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

Employing personal experience, researchers implicate themselves in their work and associate themselves intimately with others, and in research the social connections between the researcher and research participants and other stakeholders involved in the study. It is more complicated because of the social connections with participants and the research process (Ellis *et al.*, 2011)

There are three main ethical dimensions with reference to autoethnography, including the procedural dimension dealing with ethical dilemmas:

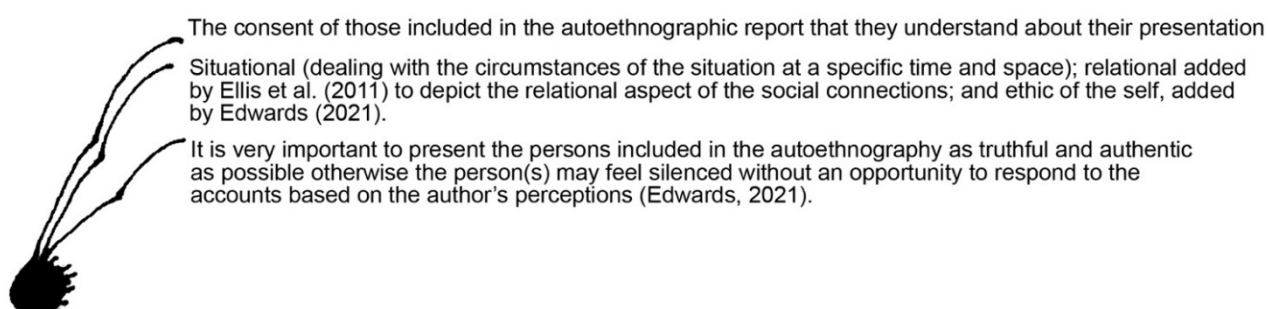


Figure 3-9: Author's artistic expression of the main ethics dimensions for an autoethnographic study



Bishop (2021) bases her ethics of self on the fact that one's knowledge is based on one's family, community and other connections. She uses autoethnography to challenge a Western approach to research that may not consider the aspects of indigenous persons sufficiently.

Still, an autoethnographic account represents multiple voices of those with whom the researcher connected during a study. One does not have control over how the autoethnographic account will be received by readers, especially when they may recognise themselves despite masking to hide their identities.

It is also important to consider potential harm that can be caused. The autoethnographic account always needs to be written from the author's perspective of a situation and interactions with others and that rigour, accountability, and integrity are always considered. At the same time, participants must have a choice of whether to be included and have the option to respond to the autoethnographic account (Holdren, 2017).

### **3.6.5 Research ethics during the pandemic**

The pandemic caused havoc not only in people's lives but also in research where researchers suddenly had to deal with an abnormal situation with no prior information to guide them. Since the pandemic many researchers published on the effects of the pandemic but now, five years after its onset, the situation is regarded as post-pandemic.

In this study, the research planning was done prior to the pandemic and halfway through the data collection the lockdown restrictions became a reality. Once the lockdown restrictions were lifted, the community partner was no longer available, having to deal with the many losses due to the pandemic. It was therefore necessary to find another community partner and the research continued with the drug rehabilitation facility's involvement. Surmiak *et al.* (2022) discuss the different approaches used during the pandemic that will be discussed next. In the reflection chapter, the reflections of the experiences in practice will be shared.

The following approaches are discussed: *nothing has changed*, *precautionary*, and *lowering ethical standards*. In the nothing has changed approach, there was the feeling that ethical principles were unaffected, and the pandemic did not influence the participants. Some researchers disapprove of changes in ethics under external circumstances because they are of the view that ethical issues should be a constant feature of any research (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

However, some believe the responses are dominated by senior researchers and not those of PhD students or other novice researchers, where the lack of direct engagement diminishes ethical beliefs in social research, or when they feel accountable for ethical gatekeeping

standards (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022). One should assume that all key aspects of ethical issues and procedures would remain the same in both offline and online research, pre- and post-pandemic (Dodds & Hess, 2020; Lobe *et al.*, 2020). They suggest that their understanding of research ethics is universal and unbiased and depends on rules rather than a social construct in different contexts (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

In the precautionary approach, researchers observed the pandemic as a threat to ethics in social research and based it on two issues: an increased risk of harm and a lowering of the standard of ethics. The researchers who opted for the precautionary approach fully intended to implement face-to-face qualitative research before the pandemic outbreak and decided to only continue their research as soon as the pandemic was over.

The precautionary principle deals with situations where uncertainties and risks are considerable and should therefore be considered as part of decision analysis and when using research methods (Aven, 2023). The outcome should then either be to take precautionary measures or not to conduct research while this situation remains. Precautionary considerations are when the risks are high, and the consequences may be unmanageable, and the uncertainties need to be addressed scientifically.

Aven (2023) concludes that the precautionary principle can be justified as a “fundamental principle expressing a normative obligation, position or perspective, but not as a decision rule prescribing what to do”. Precautionary judgments are subjective and will depend on the researchers’ values and preferences; which is why novice researchers may be uncertain whether to proceed with their research in such situations.

One of the most prominent precautions was the fact that people were severely impacted by the pandemic with increased stress, anxiety and depression levels, making it impossible for them to participate in research when survival becomes their only focus, especially in underserved settings. The researchers may also be impacted with increased stress, anxiety, and depression. Researchers may then be reluctant to burden their participants during this time or may themselves feel unable to continue with their research. It may also have been too difficult to work online, or ethical research was impossible (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

Considering the lowering of ethical standards approach may be necessary during a pandemic, while others may feel that only face-to-face research is possible. The pandemic disrupted social research globally and had a major impact on the continuing research processes, where ethics clearance was granted but no longer applied. Individual researchers therefore had to adapt their ethical approach to deal with the circumstances of the pandemic, and ethics boards were also ill-equipped to provide guidance (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

On the other hand, the pandemic brought about a particular awareness of opportunity, increasing researchers' innovativeness and flexibility. Elements of social ethics were embraced to build different relationships with participants to give them a voice and be open to their needs (Ellis, 2007) by adapting research processes (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

The researchers who employed the opportunity-oriented approach decided to adapt their research methods to suit the extraordinary circumstances of their field experiences without compromising acceptable ethical practices. This suggests that exploring research under challenging situations and continuing research reveals promise for finding positive solutions in research ethics (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

### **3.6.6 Ethics conclusion**

In this study, the above aspects of participatory community-based research, ethics associated with creative processes, relational ethics, and ethical considerations applicable to a pandemic, guided the study, especially when ethical dilemmas were faced during the fieldwork. This was done without compromising general ethical requirements associated with research. The experiences are shared in the data collection, analysis, discussion, and reflection chapters. This is in response to Su's (2022) statement that there is a lack of practical methods to guide the engagements between researchers and the participating community, despite many community-based research studies.

In this study, the ethical findings will contribute towards the development of practical methods. The author proposes an ethics memorandum of understanding as an example in community-based research where such a practical method is used.

## **3.7 Data collection**

The different data collection methods used in this study are discussed next.

### **3.7.1 Situated inquiry**

Bringing together people with different life experiences, interests, and backgrounds that might not otherwise have the opportunity to work together allows for learning experiences in social practice to unfold (Leake, 2012). The acknowledgement of shared learning should then take place, which could result in unpredictable outcomes.

There is evidence to suggest that productivity and wealth are increased as a result of greater attention being paid to how to improve the way people work together, build relationships and create futures together (Beer, 1997; Kay, 2000). Art as social practice and placing importance on processes of engagement in addition to the creation of art products have value and can address concerns about difficult issues.

Lave and Wenger (1991, cited in Leake, 2012) verify that social theories of learning recognise the significant impact that social and cultural influences have on how individuals make meaning from their learning experiences. Bowles (1989, cited in Kay, 2000) indicates that art activities could be utilised as tools with which people could manage their lives by exploring and expressing social issues of relevance to individuals and communities.

The benefit of community arts is that it enhances and improves the effectiveness of community development and should be directly associated with community development projects and not separate from them (Kay, 2000). The concept of pluriversal, assuming that there are different worldviews in situated studies, is included in the pluriversal planning scholarship of Vasudevan and Novoa (2022).

They further argue that although a community-based study is situated in time and place, it also provides an opportunity to think, act and envision transnationally. Universal claims are therefore not possible, and knowledge gained in a study in such cases is always partial, relational and grounded on difference.

The aim is to bring together people with different life experiences, interests, and backgrounds to allow learning experiences in social practice to unfold between individuals and the acknowledgment of shared learning to take place with unpredictable outcomes (Leake, 2012).

### **3.7.2 Data generation**

In this study, the framework for data generation in research proposed by Jack *et al.* (2023) is used as a guide to answer specific questions about the data generation process. The (a-r-t) and participants were involved in the study for both demonstration cases. The researcher in the role of CARER facilitated a pilot face-to-face creative process workshop with NEET youth participants in which they actively participated in the activities for art-making and reflection.

The data were generated from NEET youth virtually for the second creative workshop and with face-to-face sessions with substance users at the rehabilitation facility who partnered for this study. NEET youth data were generated during 2020 and 2021 for the online workshops that were in the midst of the pandemic. The workshops with the substance-dependent individuals were conducted between March–April 2022. Data was recorded using photographs, reflection journals from the CARER and participants, and was managed in reflection books, which were stored in a safe place.

The following assumptions were considered when the qualitative data were collected, with the specific assumption for the study indicated (Marshall and Rossman, 2006):

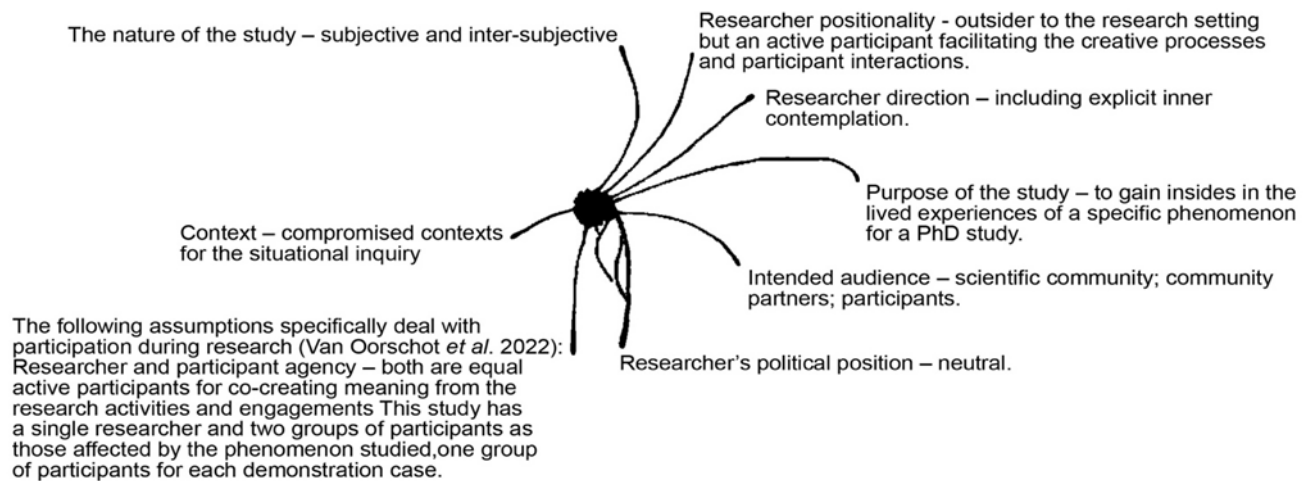


**Figure 3-10: Author's construct of the assumptions for qualitative data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2006)**

Jack *et al.* (2023) propose a framework to guide the selection of methods and data types for a qualitative study that includes questions such as what types of data will be generated, who is involved, where and when data collection will occur, and how the data will be managed (recording, storing, protection, etc.). They also consider the emotional safety of the researcher and participants during the data collection process.

In qualitative research with human participation, the person is at the centre of the research; the selection of data collection methods should support such a focus. At the same time, minimising the burden on the participant's involvement must be considered as well as protecting their emotional safety (Jack *et al.*, 2023).

It is also important for the researcher to consider their own life experiences, values that will influence the interpretation of the data (Grbich, 2007), and to navigate personal and professional boundaries and the consideration of the level of self-disclosure while building a rapport with the participants (Eaves, 2014). Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) refer to the hyphen between the concept "researcher (self)" – "participant (other)" as the "space" where this relationship is positioned and where the researcher narrates their interpretations of the participants' experiences on their behalf as they decide how to frame these within the specific context.

They remind that the researcher's identity is determined by the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher within the study and the expectations envisaged. Although the researcher-participant relationship has boundaries, these may change and may be renegotiated as the research progresses and the participants become more comfortable with the researcher and research process.

In ABR, the one research method should not be preferred as being superior over another but instead research methods or combinations thereof should be selected based on the value they have to guide the situational inquiry (Eaves, 2014).

**Table 3-2: Data collection methods and sources aligned with research questions and strategies (repeated)**

| Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Research objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Key Concept                                            | Researcher Role             | Strategy                                  | Methods                                                                       | Data Source                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RQ1:</b> How do NEET persons, who find it difficult to sustain a living in a complex context, experience their lived reality/situation?                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the self-exploration of the participants' lived realities through their contextual engagements</li> <li>Establish meaning-making of the embodiment of the participant' lived-reality</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Lived experience                                       | Researcher                  | Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) | Literature review, Observations, Body mapping                                 | Reflection Diaries, Body Maps                                     |
| <b>RQ2:</b> How can the in-situ interactions between the researcher as <u>ARTist</u> and NEET persons during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach participants creative methods to artistically express themselves</li> <li>Determine the interconnectedness of art and reality based on the <u>ARTist</u> and participants interactions during the creative process</li> <li>Observe the emergence of the participants' meaning-making through creative processes creating artistic expressions</li> <li>Create artistic expressions based on the insights gained during the study</li> </ul> | Artistic expression, lived experience, creative skills | Artist, Researcher, Teacher | Arts-Based Research (ABR)                 | Literature review, Art-making teaching with creative methods (PM, ED, BB, BM) | Creative process participation observations, Artistic expressions |
| <b>RQ3:</b> What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in complex contexts?                                                                                                                           | Reflect on the self-exploration during the research journey in the roles of artist, researcher and teacher during the study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reflections, Lived experience, Artistic expressions    | Artist, Researcher          | <u>Authoethnography</u> (AE)              | Observations (creative process, participation)                                | Reflection Diaries, Reflection journal, Observation               |

The data collection methods were used to collect the data for a specific key concept to gain the necessary insights. These methods were aligned with the research objectives to be able to answer the formulated research questions. This was done from the three perspectives of A/R/Tography, namely as (a-r-t). The same data collection instruments were used to collect data for the different perspectives, e.g., reflection diaries and body mapping were used as part of IPA and ABR to learn more about the participants' lived experiences and how they express themselves through art using the skills gained from teaching them creative processes.

Firstly, data was collected through a literature review to identify the status of the identified concepts as reported in the literature. These concepts were used to develop the proposed conceptual framework to guide the data collection processes.

### 3.7.2.1 Observations

Observations allow the researcher to note and record events, behaviours, practices, and social objects in a social setting identified as the situation for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Participant observations allow for a closer relation between the researcher and participants in their everyday setting where they live (Durdella & Durdella, 2017). It is recognised that participants are knowledgeable about their own complex life journeys as these materialise in a specific situation (Gastaldi *et al.*, 2018; Marshall *et al.*, 2006).

Observations can be direct where the presence of the researcher may not be known with limited or no interaction with the participants and the data mostly consists of the counting of frequencies or specific behaviours. Participant observation, selected for this study, is generally

unstructured and interactive with free-flowing data and the researcher interpreting the data (Guest *et al.*, 2013).

However, the recording of the observations is guided by, for example, questions to consider the purpose of the observations (Durdella & Durdella, 2017). Guest *et al.* (2013) indicate the following benefits of using participant observation as follows: to explore a situation; to avoid suspect or self-reported data, especially in the case where participants do not want to record their own behaviour, e.g., a person committing fraud; to identify behaviour that may be overlooked due to limitations of procedural memory; to lessen reporting biases based on perceived views rather than the social reality; to integrate observed behaviour *in situ*; to observe behaviour as it happens by being in direct contact with the phenomenon investigated.

With the researcher being there immersed in the situation and observing the participants as the research unfolds, allows the consideration of the how and why of human behaviour (Guest *et al.*, 2013). They suggest that it is important when considering observations as a research method to take notes, record voices, sounds and images; ask questions or use probes to uncover meaning behind the behaviours.

During the situational inquiry, the following data provide the background to observations: getting into the location of the situation and building a trust rapport with the participants for them to be comfortable and to “be themselves”. In addition, the following are important for observations: noting rules and norms typical to the situation; routine actions that happen below the level of conscious thought; actions and thoughts such as for example personal rituals and routines.

#### 3.7.2.2 Reflections

Reflecting provides a person with the opportunity to constantly learn and gain new knowledge by reflecting on one’s thoughts and experiences (Martikainen *et al.*, 2021). In this study, reflection forms part of creative practices, to consider “how you know” (Cross, 2011; Yin, 2011). Critical reflection could lead to action and change and improvement in lived experiences (Coemans *et al.*, 2015; Mannay, 2016; Martikainen, 2019; Purcell, 2012). Social and cultural influences may have an impact on how individuals make meaning from their *in situ* lived experiences (Leake, 2012).

In qualitative research where the researcher assumes a subjectivist stance towards the study, it is possible that the researcher may unintentionally influence the results. It is therefore important to be transparent and to make biases, thoughts, opinions, and feelings visible and this can be done with a reflective journal (Ortlipp, 2008). It is then possible for the reader to interpret the findings given the researcher’s assumptions, goals, values, and internal belief systems. Ortlipp (2008) suggests the following guidelines for keeping a reflective journal:

describe the context from a personal perspective and make the analysis process visible and transparent by showing the codes that lead to the derived themes supported by direct quotations from the participants. In that way, make biases visible.

The researcher needs to consider the influences of their own life experiences since these, considered as frames through an iterative framing process, will influence the participants' involvement based on being-in-their world (Finlay, 2014a; Grbich, 2007). Grbich further indicates that the research design decision and guiding of the interpretations are also influenced by the researcher's positioning in the study.

The power and position of the researcher is fluid and dynamic as the researcher enters the field and through engagements becomes more knowledgeable about planned research (Watson, 2020). However, the participants are experts with knowledge of their own lived experiences. In addition, in this study, the researcher is also an experienced artist expert and in her role as teacher, she has prior experience of teaching the art skills previously to her students at the university. When the research considered experiences and, in this case, lived experience, a critical reflection is necessary to make sense of the research and in this study the researcher kept a self-reflective diary to capture the entire experience.

Since the researcher was also an active participant in the study, influencing the research process and participant involvement, it was critical to continuously and promptly record reflections in a reflection journal. Specifically focusing on reflective journals allowed the researcher to participate in the methodological process. This fostered an understanding of biases, values, and past experiences, and how these affected the researcher's position (Ortlipp, 2008). Both the researcher and the participants kept reflective journals that captured our reflections in reflective diaries. It was important to continuously assess both emotions and experiences to understand how these influenced the research process and participant engagement (Göker, 2016).

Finlay (2014a) argues that the embodied inter-subjective relationships of the researcher and participants appear beneath and between verbal interactions where meaning is formed in a non-verbal manner, which the author refers to as reflexive embodied empathy and embodied dwelling processes. This could also be considered as the person's felt sense. Goldstein (2017) refers to the transformative quality of co-created reflections that contextualise the shared lived experiences. Lived experiences are embedded in their respective contexts and lived worlds (Woodgate *et al.*, 2021).

In participatory research, reflection could lead to mutual learning of the researcher and participants, especially if the focus is on reflection-in-action (Ten Holter, 2022). ABR is based



on a continuous reflexive process about the research setting, investigated phenomenon, and research audience to create new knowledge (Seregina, 2020; Watson, 2020).

Duchi *et al.* (2023) considered reflection in problem-oriented education that covered the cognitive, phenomenological, relational, and global aspects of reflection. They propose the following reflection categories, where the one dimension considers the breadth of reflection in terms of self, others, and the world; and a depth of reflection dimension considering no reflection, reflection, reflection on reflection and reflection on reflection on reflection.

The seven reflection categories appear on the graph as: Superficial on the self and no reflection intersection point; cognitive on the self and reflection intersection point; relational on the others intersection with reflection; and meta on the others and reflection on reflection intersection point; on the world breadth: societal intersecting with reflection, critical intersecting with reflection on reflection, and fractal intersecting with reflection on reflection on reflection.

I used a reflection journal to examine and record everything that I observed and experienced during my own research journey as well as anything that influenced my research process. A reflective journal provides a safe and private place to reflect on one's being, experiences, and thoughts through a self-directed dialogue process (Frechette *et al.*, 2025).

Reflection implies that the researcher analyses and qualifies the research experience to obtain more clarity about the experience and the responses of those involved, the researcher and participants. This allows the researcher to adjust the methods used to engage with the field. Keeping a reflective journal also helps to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by adding evidence and can be used as an additional source of research data (Ortlipp, 2008) by providing valuable contextual information.

It may, however, be difficult to create a scientific publication based on a personal research journal (Ortlipp, 2008). In justifying the use of a reflective journal, the author organised his reflections as key excerpts that emerged from the reflections, namely: providing a personal view on the context of the study as experienced when in the field; reflecting on the qualitative methods chosen and used when notes are taken during and after a data collection activity; reflecting on how a trust relationship was developed with the participants.

The activity involving a written reflective journal, in which one captures one's own opinions and reflections on one's research work, has proven to be a valid qualitative process in a research study. I perceive my reflective journal of the participants' reflective diaries, to be a valuable resource for my own sensemaking of what I have observed, as suggested by Yin (2011). It assists me with the retrospective reading of the creative processes I used to create the work, created to "tell" the authentic story of my research to the respective audiences (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Lindseth & Norberg, 2022).

### 3.7.2.3 Field notes

Field notes in qualitative research provide the researcher with consideration of contextual influences (geographical, demographics, societal pressures); participant interactions, demeanour, and appearances; language-focused data supplements; sensory data; impressions; and non-verbal cues (Finlay, 2014a; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2018). Recording field notes is the first step in converting observations to data (Ravitch & Carl, 2018).

The researcher must already consider how to organise and analyse notes when recording *in situ* observations about the field since it will become one of the primary data sources (Altheide & Schneider, 2012; Mills *et al.*, 2009). The researcher must consider their interpretive filters when describing, interpreting, and evaluating their notes for observing behaviours and events (Ravitch & Carl, 2018).

The researcher should focus on what happens and why it happened during the research activities and for that the researcher needs to be immersed in the field. The field notes included aspects of participant behaviour as well as noted points of confusion and other non-verbal cues that may be relevant to the study and are the start of communicating about the research experience (Mills *et al.*, 2009).

Researchers must continuously make inferences and judgements when taking notes of observed behaviour (Ravitch & Carl, 2018). Mills *et al.* (2009) suggest that to counter the unpredictability nature of the situation in practice it is important to ensure the quality of recorded notes.

Altheide and Schneider (2012) suggest the following points, amongst other considerations, to consider when investigating a phenomenon: entry to the field; self-representation; building relations of trust; researcher's position in terms of the study; problems, misconceptions, or surprises; data types, collection, and analysis methods.

### 3.7.2.4 Creative workshops

In this study, creative processes were used to encourage participants to visually express their experiences. These workshops were well planned but presented challenges in the field. The reflections on these challenges presented additional insights into the research that can contribute towards using these methods in research. Similar to the experience of Tarr *et al.* (2018) with using liveness arts-based methods, collective experiences of “being there” were important but difficult to capture as data. They considered research as an active engagement with an ever-changing social world that can never be regarded as a static reality. They therefore suggest the consideration of methods that cater for “ongoingness”, relationality, contingency, and sensuousness.

This means that the planning of the methods needs to be considered beyond only collecting, recording, and analysing the data. Like their experience, the participants in this study were also overwhelmingly positive about their participation in the creative workshops after an initial sceptical stage when they did not know what to expect.

Art-making can be incorporated into collaborative research to generate data as an outcome of a creative process as well as a representation of the findings as an artistic expression. They further indicate that, at the same time, art-making also provides an opportunity for reflections on its process and artwork as an outcome to expand the qualitative findings (Trout *et al.*, 2022).

Arts-based workshops produce the following data sets to be analysed: the artworks, texts with the reflections of both the researcher and participants, and photos of the participation activities. Each of these outputs contains partial data and may be partially connected to provide a more complete view of the workshops and should not be regarded as a triangulation method (Tarr *et al.*, 2018).

They suggest that the binding between these data sets is the experiential layer and even though this may be partially absent in the collected data it should not be a problem since it is not always possible to express in language. Absences are also significant (e.g., when participants are not able or willing to explain or discuss their artwork). Data cannot be discovered but is part of the here and now of a situation to be constructed as part of the research process. It is important for the researcher to be present as "being there" in the situation within its specific context and to specifically reflect on thereness (Tarr *et al.*, 2018).

Participant visual methodologies can help to facilitate the researcher's self-reflection process when studying a complex phenomenon, especially when sensitive topics form part of the study. They further suggest that it is important to obtain additional consent if the participant is visible in any of the art expressions. In this study, as part of adhering to the scientific ethics regarding anonymity, the photo of the participant holding his body map was blurred out and the researcher created a sketch of the participant that has impressions of the participant without it having identifiable features to be included in the scientific publications. However, the participants indicated that they want to be recognisable on the body maps when these are exhibited (O'Donovan *et al.*, 2019).

### **3.7.3 Online data collection**

In the first case data was collected during the pandemic. The participants were given instructions to draw seed pods which is one of my items I enjoy collecting for drawing references. In this case, WhatsApp, an affordable and already extensively used by most

participants digital platform, was used to communicate with participants, individually as well as a groups.

It was important to recruit participants prior to starting the data collection. Other important factors were firstly, to keep track of the participants; this was achieved by using a Google sheet with all the participant details, secondly, to record the informed consent for each participant by copying it from the text the participant had sent and pasting it in the sheet.

Drawing forms were created and shared on the WhatsApp groups and translated in English and English/IsiXhosa after the online drawing workshop.

The next consideration was to obtain informed consent using online methods such as online interviews and online forms/sheets. At the beginning of the online creative exercise, the purpose of the research and interviews was explained. Participants were reminded about their rights of participation in this research study, which is aligned with ethical considerations. All participants were requested to give consent for individual components of the research aspect. The responses were recorded as part of the interview.

The same process was followed for workshops or focus groups. Because each individual research component required consent, I opted to obtain informed consent prior to the online session. The data was captured via WhatsApp, email, SMS, or any other appropriate technology platform. Utilising all these platforms for consent, the management thereof took some time to ensure that all participants consented to all activities.

The following text was shared with the participants: *"I, {first name surname} have read the document that explains the details of the project {Project short name} in which I will participate. I agree that I understand the purpose of the research and what is required of me, and that my participation is anonymous and voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time".*

The above text was sent to the participant following a short description of the purpose of the study, details of the researcher and instructions for giving informed consent (to copy the provided text and insert the name of the participant. Instructions to the participants were provided to share their information with a dedicated cell number /email. It was crucial to always provide a range of options for the participants and allow them to use what is easier for them. The communication to their cell phones was necessary for their participation in the study, but the numbers were never recorded in the data sets to avoid having identifiable data.

There was a possibility that the participants may not have data to participate in the online activity. This is typical in underserved settings where access to the Internet is often only available through mobile phones where data is rather expensive. Most participants only have connectivity when they have money to buy data which is often not the case. Considerations

were made to provide the participants with a data voucher. This had to be administered carefully since the vouchers may be used for other purposes that have nothing to do with the research. The issuing of vouchers was significant to ensure that the participant's use intent was confirmed before issuing the voucher.

Participants were approached and, if they agreed to participate with the intended use, they were required to share their commitment to the dedicated contact number provided. To capture the data the participants' commitment was copied into the WhatsApp chat together with the voucher number before sending the voucher.

I was interested in the link between the physical artefact, skill (printmaking). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to our daily lives and health. Staying indoors, wearing masks, and social distancing are a few of the laws that we must adhere to. Group gatherings were prohibited under the Level 4 restrictions at the time of the study. Therefore, face-to-face workshops of any nature were prohibited and online teaching/online workshops have become our new norm.

Face-to-face creative facilitation has been haphazardly halted since the beginning of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The easing of restrictions to Level 2 in 2021 allowed for travel outside one's province, and gatherings of a maximum of 10 people were then allowed.

In my view, teaching online theory subjects has fewer challenges than teaching practical online, as I experienced during the pandemic. Connectivity and accessibility remain challenging not only to our graduates but more so to communities in underserved settings dealing with complex problems.

#### *3.7.3.1 Face-to-face data collection for the second case*

During the face-to-face sessions, I collected narratives as personal reflections of my observations and reflections in a research journal, and the participants' reflections on their own experiences during the research process in the provided diaries.

Observations were made during all the research activities of both participants' reactions during the sessions as well as their application of the creative skills to express themselves artistically (in reflective field journal).

#### *3.7.3.2 Reflections (reflective diaries)*

Body mapping (body maps) was used to gain insights into their expression of themselves as they perceive their bodies. It was not intended to be used as the main method but merely as a mechanism for the youth to express themselves. For this study, the creative approach was employed with a group of substance-dependant individuals for a duration of five weeks, meeting three days each week.

### **3.7.3.3 Creative sessions (*art-making and art-doing – artistic expressions*)**

I used body mapping as an expressive tool in the form of storytelling as part of my ABR strategy. In research, body mapping works well as a participatory qualitative tool. However, insights into a deeper understanding of the well-being of NEET persons can be gained by employing body mapping as an additional, extensive research tool. Participants' well-being could be assessed using body mapping as a research tool, but this would require an art therapist to be present and, therefore, was outside of the scope of this study. I also facilitated printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, and bookbinding workshops for the research, where I taught them the skills required for the art-making (Gatto, 2009).

## **3.7.4 Participant selection and sampling**

### **3.7.4.1 Participant selection**

In both cases, the number of participants was determined by the availability and willingness of the target group to participate. The recruitment strategy was to partner with a community organisation already involved with initiatives similar to the aim of the study, in the first case with NEET unemployed youth and in the second case with persons with a substance dependency problem. The number of participants who qualify for the study was in line with the smaller number of participants required for a phenomenological study to collect rich data to gain a proper understanding of the lived experiences (Frechette *et al.*, 2020; Smith *et al.*, 2017).

The NEET participants, previously involved in an all-inclusive research project, were invited to join this study, along with other NEET youth who expressed interest, due to the positive connection established during the collaboration in the Theewaterskloof district of a rural town in the Western Cape Province.

In the second case, substance-dependant individuals facing substance abuse issues were chosen from those admitted to a rehabilitation programme organised by our community partner. I played no role in their selection process. It was communicated to me that six male participants would be involved, as the Centre strictly segregates men and women in all facilitation activities. They not only gave permission for the data collection but were keen to be part of the study with the possibility of incorporating some of the creative methods as part of their rehabilitation activities.

### **3.7.4.2 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study was the lived experience as experienced by the participants and how the experience is influenced by a phenomenon in a compromised context.

### 3.7.4.3 Data collection linked to the research strategies

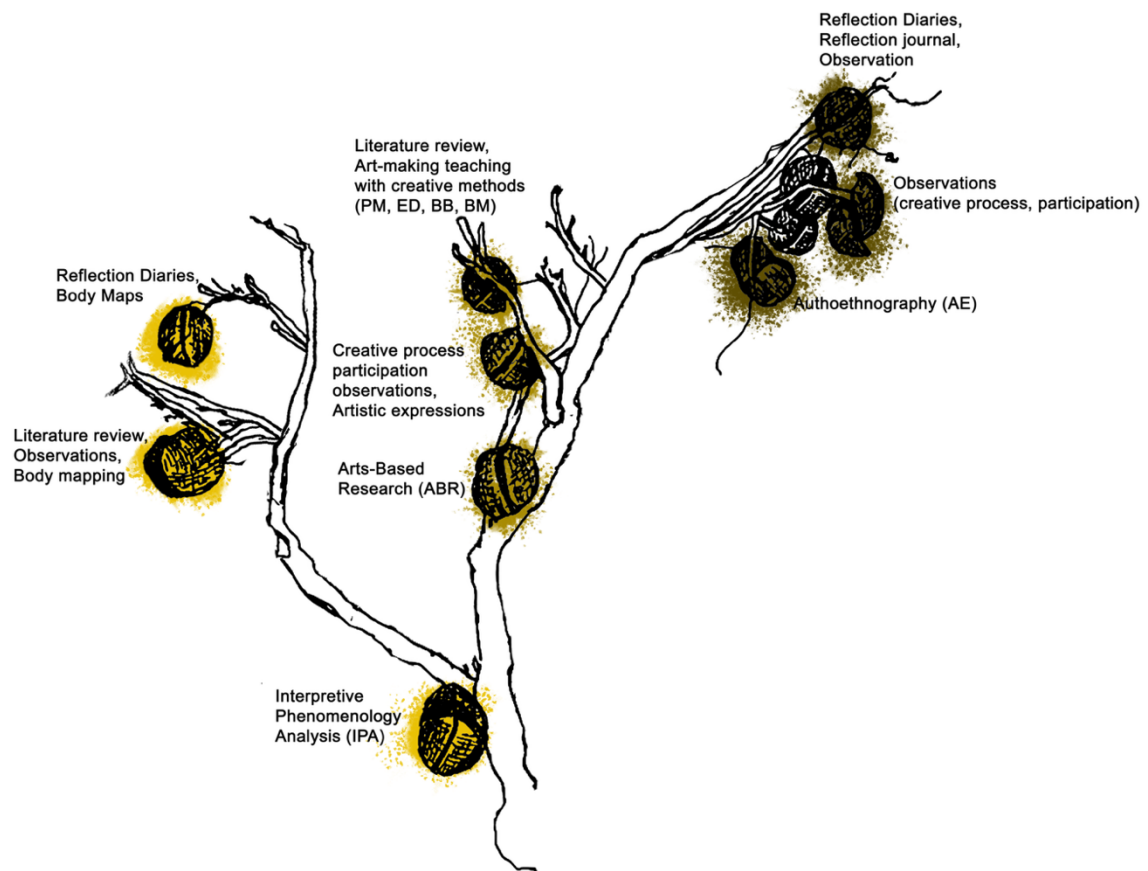


Figure 3-11: Author's artistic expression of the selected research strategies

**Table 3-3: Research strategies and associated methods and data sources**

| Research strategy                         | Methods                                                                         | Data sources                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) | Literature review, Observations, Body mapping                                   | Reflection Diaries, Body Maps                                     |
| Arts-Based Research (ABR)                 | Literature review, Art - making teaching with creative methods (PM, ED, BB, BM) | Creative process participation observations, Artistic expressions |
| Autoethnography (AE)                      | Observations (creative process, participation)                                  | Reflection Diaries, Reflection journal, Observation               |

### 3.8 Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data for subjective or social meanings is defined as: “the classification and interpretation of linguistic or visual material *to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it*” (Flick, 2013). One of the aims of qualitative data analysis is to describe a phenomenon and the subjective experiences of a specific individual or group of people (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). In this study, the aim guided the data collection and analysis processes considering the lived experiences of the participants.

The thematic and visual analysis processes for this study are discussed next.

#### 3.8.1 Thematic analysis of qualitative data

In qualitative analysis, a categorising process is followed to identify similarity between data segments as well as relations that are based on connections, or associations between data segments in a data set (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014).

There are several categorising strategies, but the one used in this study is a combination of coding and the theme formation where data segments are firstly labelled with a descriptive code. The code is a label as a word or short phrase assigned to a data segment to link the data to an idea that the researcher identified as important for the study (King, 2004; Saldaña, 2021). It could be aspects of social life present in the data such as a person’s activities, perceptions, expressions, and experiences.

The code then represents a “summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute” for a text or visual data segment (Saldaña, 2021). Next, the codes are organised, grouped and sorted according to the categories to provide a similarity-based or association-based ordering



of the data segments (ibid). It may be necessary to add another level of grouping to reduce the number of categories until a manageable number remains - Saldaña (2021) refers to this as “how we get ‘up’ from the diversity of data to the shapes of the data”.

A theme is an outcome of the coding, analysis, and analytical reflection process and whereas a category can be regarded as a word or phrase that describes the data segment while a theme is a word or phrase that describes a more subtle and tacit process (Saldaña, 2021).

The positioning of the researcher will also influence the allocation of codes to reflect the constructs, concepts, language, and theories that inform the study (Saldaña, 2021).

In this thesis, an excerpt of the thematic analysis process as an example is provided and the main themes are explained to guide the reader. Data collected for this study were qualitatively analysed and coded in ATLAS.ti by reading and re-reading of text, using a combination of both predetermined codes and the development of new code lists, allowing for the emergence of concepts, categories, and their relationships with other categories through an iterative process of theoretical sampling and constant comparison.

Due to the restrictions on movement and the requiring for social distancing, I had to reconsider data collection strategies. As a result of the restrictions, social technology had to be implemented to limit the need for face-to-face contact.

A multi-modal approach is needed to analyse the dimensions of a sense experience, such as felt-sense, the aesthetic aspect of language and visual imagery as used by Boden and Eatough (2014). They used intertwined complementary analysis methods for their hermeneutic-phenomenological approach to analyse the data transcripts, drawings and to integrate the themes developed.

The research assistant and CARER analysed the data with three distinct, but intertwined phases: analysis of the transcript, analysis of the drawing, and thematic integration.

### **3.8.2 Visual analysis**

Data produced by arts-based methods may be difficult to interpret (Lyon & Carabelli, 2016). Arts can enhance research findings gained through traditional research processes and is well suited to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by people (CohenMiller, 2018). He explains that this is because it is possible to reach what is not otherwise possible, both what is visible and invisible when using creative methods to create artworks based on prompts given by the research.

This could therefore assist with expressing a lived experience. During the creative process participants are encouraged to think about themselves and their lived worlds to “see” their experiences. At the same time, it provides a distance from the typical more intense verbal

methods, such as for example an interview. When studying a particular phenomenon, it is advisable to cover a range of the human experience by moving between verbal, emotion, memory, and perception-based experiences. Art also provides the means to find the participants' "voice" in articulating their experiences (CohenMiller, 2018).

Images therefore generally provide a more detailed visual account than what spoken word transcripts can as well as more detailed artistic expressions of the participants. Quotes to support the themes as evidence can also be visualisations with, for example comprehensive background information. This could lead to additional data management challenges to manage the visual data technically as well as considering ethical aspects such, as for example, the inclusion of identifiable features of the participants or a specific context (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014).

The drawings of the participants in this study were analysed guided by the proposed drawing analysis framework of Boden and Eatough (2014) to make meaning of the participants' and the researcher's experiences. The framework was also used by Craythorne *et al.* (2024) in their study about participants' views of their bodies as part of a mental health study.

**Table 3-4: Framework for the analysis of drawings based on (Source: Boden & Eatough, 2014; Craythorne et al., 2023:3)**

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contents                                 | Description each of the distinct elements of the images                                                                                         |
| Materials                                | Which material that has been used for each element                                                                                              |
| Balance                                  | The interplay of elements                                                                                                                       |
| Colour                                   | How colour has been used as hues and the emotional quality of colour                                                                            |
| Focus                                    | What was the visual focus of the image                                                                                                          |
| Expressive content / empathetic reaction | What was the emotional mood of the image, the feeling/s that evoked the viewer had in response to bodily, emotional, memories, and images used. |
| Signs and symbolism                      | Were there symbols describing words                                                                                                             |
| Style                                    | Did the drawing style reflect individual trend or quality                                                                                       |
| Text                                     | Has text been included, for example birth and pseudo names, the placement of the text and where it was included                                 |

The selected analysis of drawings based on Boden and Eatough (2014) and Craythorne *et al.* (2024) shares the same sentiments of Rose's visual analysis guidelines (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2012).

### **3.8.3 Researcher positioning as insider-outsider**

The concept of insider-outsider dynamics in research has undergone extensive exploration across diverse academic disciplines, spanning multiculturalism, sociology, psychology, education, and political science. Scholars have critically examined this inherent dichotomy,

challenging the conventional dualistic distinction between insiders and outsiders (Merriam *et al.*, 2001; Stroup & Goode, 2023; Zempi, 2016). Rather than asserting the superiority of one research type over the other, the literature has focused on evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of insider research, considering aspects such as access, intrusiveness, familiarity, and rapport (Mercer, 2007). Notably, researchers are acknowledged as neither purely outsiders nor insiders but as active co-participants in the research activity (Kelly, 2014).

The exploration of the insider-outsider dilemma extends to methodological and ethical considerations. Discussions on positionality often conceptualise these dynamics in terms of insider-outsider relationships, probing the extent to which a researcher's identities become integrated into the research process (Holmes, 2021). Additionally, the literature underscores the significance of reflexivity in negotiating insider-outsider status, recognising that researchers may face discomfort and challenges while navigating their roles (Hamdan, 2010). Furthermore, the insider-outsider distinction is acknowledged to be weighed down with both logistical and conceptual challenges (Porisky & Glas, 2022).

Consideration is also given to the impact of insider-outsider dynamics on the research process and outcomes. While insiders may hold an advantage in formulating nuanced and meaningful research questions (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015), the literature cautions against the potential loss of perspective when a researcher becomes too closely identified with the insider role, emphasising the importance of maintaining a critical distance (Adriansen & Madsen, 2009).

In conclusion, the literature on insider-outsider dynamics in research underscores the intricate nature of these roles and emphasises the need for critical engagement with these dynamics across various research contexts. It highlights the crucial importance of reflexivity, ethical considerations, and the recognition of researchers as co-participants in the research process.

Data collection and analysis for the study occurred in stages following a phased approach.

### **3.9 Dissemination**

The dissemination strategy is to, in addition to this thesis, publish the findings in accredited research journals to share the knowledge and methods contributions of the study. Suitable conferences will also be identified to explore collaboration and networking opportunities. The findings will also be shared with the community organisations that are partners for the study.

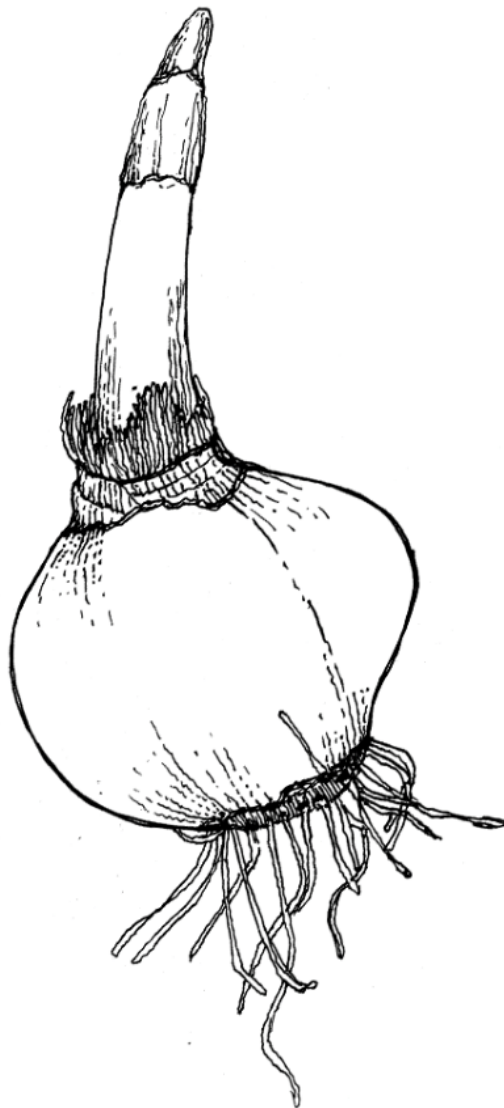
### **3.10 Chapter conclusion**

While some scholars highlighted the positive contributions of the (a-r-t) to research projects, others warned of potential drawbacks and the necessity of critically assessing the implications of artists' participation in various initiatives. The complex nature of the (a-r-t) roles in research

emphasised the need for diverse viewpoints and reflective practices to effectively navigate the intricacies of artistic research.

In conclusion, integrating reflective practices and recognising the emotional dimensions of research, the CARER was able to navigate the roles effectively, manage biases, and enhance the quality and complexity of the (a-r-t) and the participants' creative studies. Reflective journals served as valuable tools for the (a-r-t) to engage in critical self-reflection, make essential amendments to the research design, and ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the studies qualitative research endeavours.

## CHAPTER 4: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



*"The newly hatched baby bird is usually bald or has only a few soft feathers. Once the egg home has been abandoned, the mother bird will often clear it out of the nest to make more room for their new offspring."*

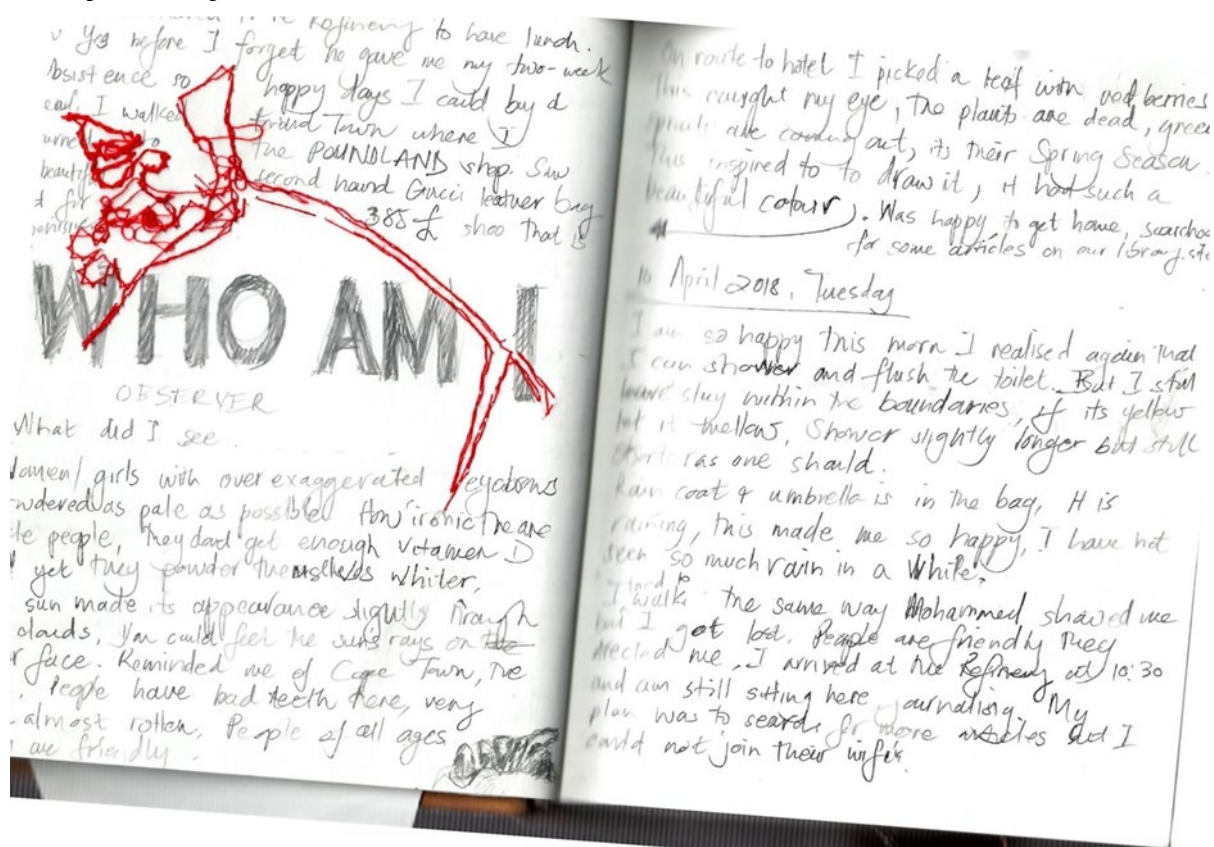


#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, my journey as, firstly, an artist and, secondly, a teacher, towards becoming a researcher is described. The chapter includes both artistic expressions and a narrative to authentically present my journey and how these roles developed. My focus is on my lived experience that has shaped my identity as an artist–researcher-teacher over time. I use the following dimensions of lived experience to reflect on my journey, namely: cognitive – my emotions and thoughts; behavioural – my actions (what I do); environmental – the influences of the environment on me and my response to it; physical – the influence of my body on my experience; technological – how the use of technology in my life influences my experience.

As an artist, I draw my inspiration from visuals, and I use the metaphor of a nest as a safe space from which I hatch into my different roles, represented by eggs. I refer to the hatching process as nestling to illustrate my dependence on my supervisors, referred to as my incubators, until I am ready to operate as a confident, independent researcher. The significance of the nest as a metaphor and the use of eggs is explained as part of my reflection as an artist.

## 4.2 My identity as an artist and teacher



### 4.2.1 Becoming an artist

As far back as I can remember as a child, I was fascinated by insects. During my secondary schooling, I found it difficult to learn and discovered that using images and drawings to remember the written word assisted me in my learning. I thrived at drawing at school. Additionally, my siblings and I were taught hand sewing, machine sewing and knitting. For my tertiary studies, I enrolled in a Fine Art B-Tech degree specialising in printmaking, etching as my major. Etching as a technique emerged from the method of decorating armour in the fourteenth century.

Etching is my preferred method for detailed artistic expression. *There are not many South African artists practising this old tradition, as it is a particularly technical process and incredibly labour intensive.* Etching was becoming a dying trade, but I always combined my sustainable practices using ordinary found objects with etching to ensure its survival.

As a student, I was still fascinated by insects, especially the fly, which I collected for drawing resources. Etching lends itself to scratching/drawing hair-fine lines to capture the fine details of the artwork (insect). The magnifying glass was my third eye in capturing every detail of the fly when etching.

*As part of my B-tech exhibition, I was drawn to etching decaying matter.*

This theme was later explored in a solo exhibition content of which consisted of decayed human feet at various stages of decay. Forensic pathologists can infer, by examining insects and flies, the length of time the body has been dead. Before the etching phase of the exhibition and to ensure that I captured the detail perfectly, I made an appointment with a forensic pathologist at a hospital to source some visual material. I was offered a closer look by a professor at a hospital in Bloemfontein of a person that was found at a very late stage of decay to observe and document photographs. I declined the offer.

### *Objects sourced towards sustainability*

During my tenure as an artist, I started collecting discarded, banal found objects. One of the cleaning staff showed me circular cleaning machine brushes that she had stored. My attraction to circular artefacts had always been reflective. I used these shapes to represent the Self, embodying the wholeness of my psyche in both conscious and unconscious processes. The circle served as an endless symbol of the eternal and the essence of mystery.

The round brush had a hole in the centre made from wood and was covered with hair-like bristles of different lengths, containing dirt. These found objects intuitively guided my creative process, and I started etching intricate details of dust mites under a microscope found in almost all dusty spaces one can think of.



The found brushes became a metaphor for home for the dust mite etchings, which I enclosed in the inner circle of the found object and covered with a round etched glass panel. An exhibition of round found objects was born, integrating traditional etching techniques with found objects. Similarly, I was made aware by a Bloemfontein colleague of discarded street brushes utilised on a tractor to clean tarred streets.

Naturally, this inspired me to create a series using these large round-shaped objects with bristles attached to a wooden inner core, approximately 30 cm in width and height, with bristles spanning 1 metre in length integrated, with traditional etching combined with glass etching.



During my tenure as an artist, I collected many found objects, decaying organic matter for drawing resources and for creating collagraphs, dried orchid petals and any other beautifully shaped dried petals to sew on paper in combination with embossing. Additionally, I collected

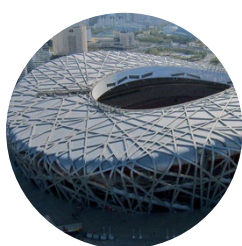




seed pods for their shape and textural quality. I find nests fascinating, how nature achieves this so perfectly. Nests are homes, woven with narratives to be voiced.

*I underlaid the nest I found at the seashore as a watermark.*

I recently collected a nest that was washed ashore woven with sticks and twigs. Still intrigued by this find, I was probing if it was a bird's nest or a sea creature? The unknown is mysterious, I am comfortable in that space, as I enjoy the element of surprise to the known. Being an artist, I constantly explore with new drawing, printing and eco dyeing techniques on paper since it is an intriguing space that leads to insightful findings.



The stadium built in Beijing for the Olympics in 2008 was a spectacular architectural building to view inspired by a bird's nest and consequently named the *Birds Nest*. My attraction to wasp and bees' nests which are scientifically/mathematically created which I perceive as homes for many guests and they too have fascinating stories to share.



*My artistic passion for working sustainably finding discarded and banal found objects to create artwork by giving them new life has always been intrinsically part of who I am. Collecting decayed natural materials in specific sites to create prints not only that has meaning and value but also as a source of inspiration. The satisfaction of starting a creative project from using sustainable materials to create impactful artwork that requires simple design thinking and application skills was humbling.*



#### **4.2.2 The artist becoming an artist-teacher**

My research journey was rewarding, but there were numerous challenges. What follows is my visual research journey, reflecting my experiences (individual and shared) and visual intrigues, presented autoethnographically on an 8-metre-long reflection diary/map. Being an artist was foreseeable. Knowing how to teach was an inherent skill I learnt from my mother. She has been a distinguished teacher for 40 years and is still teaching privately at the age of 72. Transitioning to being a researcher was challenging, as it had previously been said while undertaking my Master's degree that I was unable to write. My motivation was crushed.

My PhD journey, as an artist-teacher-researcher (a-r-t), unfolds in the next section.

*The above narration is important since it defines my identity as a person with an artistic approach to everything I do and how I experience my life first as an artist. I also realised that circles are my natural thinking preference for relating concepts.*

My doctoral research journey started after my engagement with the international PARTY (Participatory Development with the Youth) collaborative project. I was invited to participate and facilitate a creative workshop with a group of San youth in Khwa-ttu, Western Cape Province, using printmaking techniques. The excitement of doing this project made me realise the enjoyment I felt when teaching sustainable creativity with youth and in transferring my creative skills.

#### *An artistic approach towards becoming a researcher*

By default, I roamed and explored the grounds before I facilitated the creative workshop to get a sense of the space, taking in what was on the dry sandy earth – the surroundings, the vegetation, and the decayed plant matter. I am easily happy alone and am content with that. I captured my felt sense of my footsteps on the ground in an intuitive map in black paint. As I was wandering, I collected some dried natural materials for the printmaking workshop but had nothing yet that intrigued me to use as inspiration to create my own site-specific artwork.

#### *Finding my source of inspiration*

Only after the completion of the workshop in Khwa-ttu, while we drove on the sandy road heading to Cape Town, a small dried-out twig with translucent, round seed pods caught my eye. My colleague had to bring the car to an immediate halt, creating a dusty cloud as I struggled to uproot the dried-out plant matter. At last, I found my inspirational piece. A drawing of the dried twig and seed pods is captured in black fine liner on the reflection map.

#### *At a crossing point towards becoming a researcher*

I was reluctant to enrol for my PhD since I feared that the study would need to be in written form. When I was informed that I could use an artist-informed approach, this became the catalyst for enrolling in my doctoral studies in mid-2017. I was pleased with my selection of main supervisor and co-supervisor, who both encouraged me throughout my study. In addition to that, I recalled what a retired colleague had told me: “Do your PhD; it will be a meal ticket

for you to explore new opportunities". From the start, I explored ideas to create a large visual reflection diary/map measuring 490 mm in width and 8 metres long.

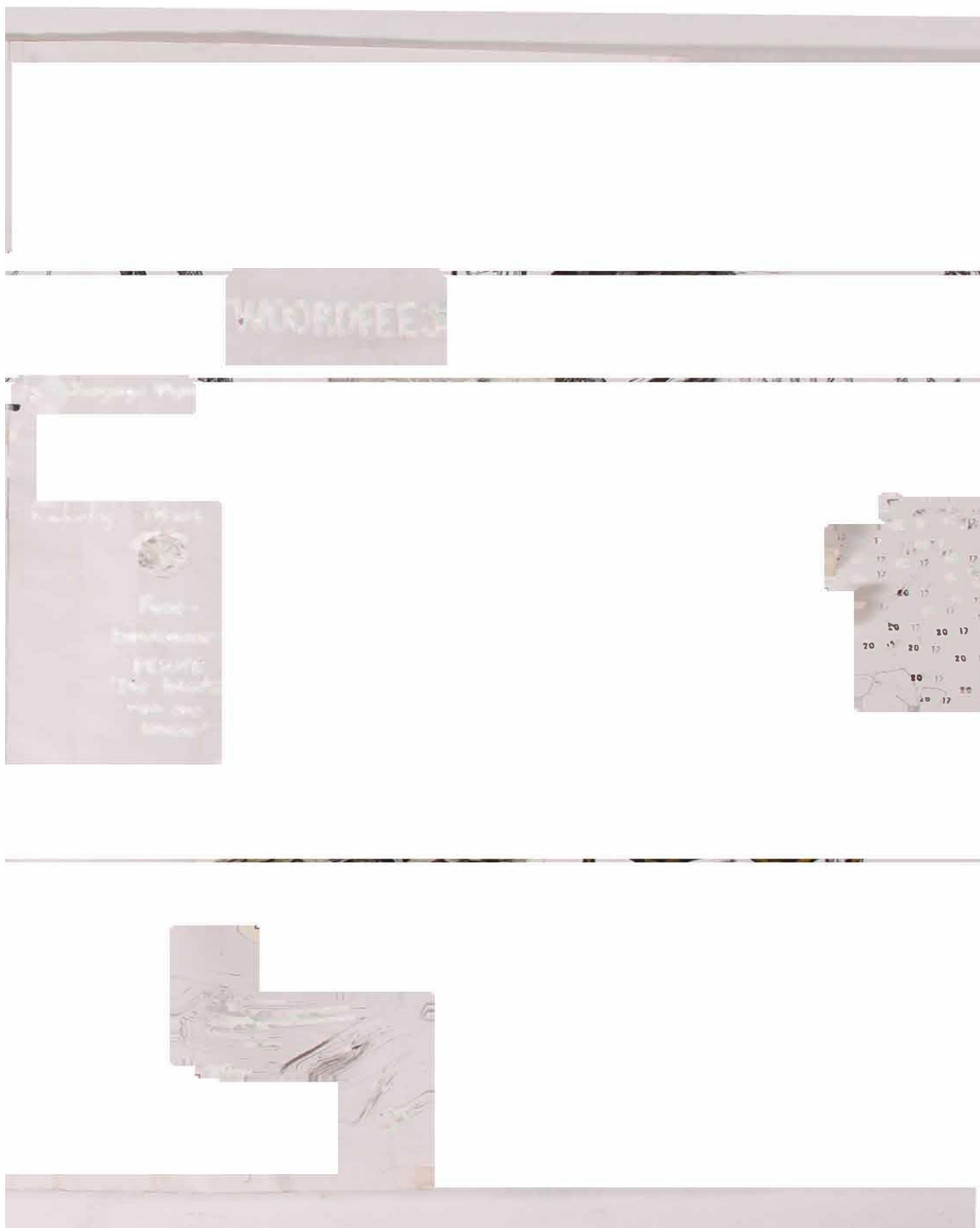
*Art and teaching as a means towards becoming a researcher*



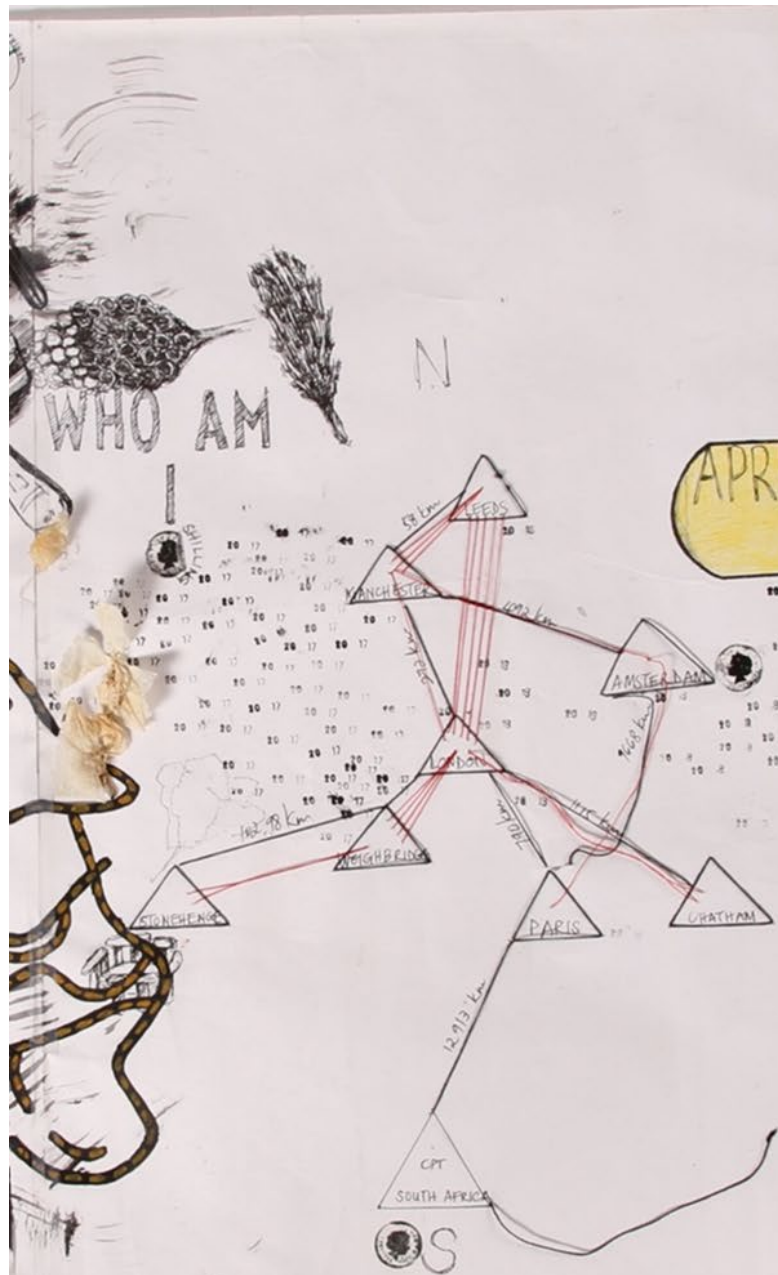
After thinking of a few visual presentation options, I created a visual representation of my journey as an artist, teacher, and researcher. The reflection diary/map was organised chronologically from 2017 until 2023 to capture all my artistic and teaching skills, entering research and understanding on a deeper level, personal experiences, as well as my data collection. I was excited that I could use my creative knowledge to transfer skills to communities, envisioning a PhD to represent what I really loved doing. I initially began my proposal by focusing on several theories to see how these could be used as analytical lenses during my creative processes and extensively engaged with the literature to reach the insights needed for a PhD study.

### *Still being an artist*

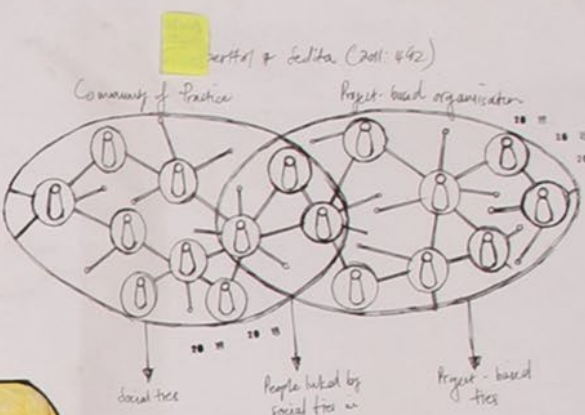
During March 2018, I was invited as the main artist at the *Woordfees* in Stellenbosch. Young up-and-coming artists struggle to exhibit their work in well-established gallery spaces. The exhibition was titled “*Die letsele van ons lewens*”, exploring mark making with cleaning utensils used by women in their homes, represented by large charcoal drawings; I applied my sewing skills on the paper, creating three-dimensional cleaning brushes, drawing on ceramics, and producing traditional etchings. Strangely, although it was a stressful period, I flourished since it was my safe and desired space, being creative where nothing else existed.





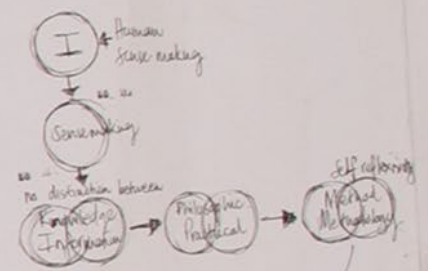


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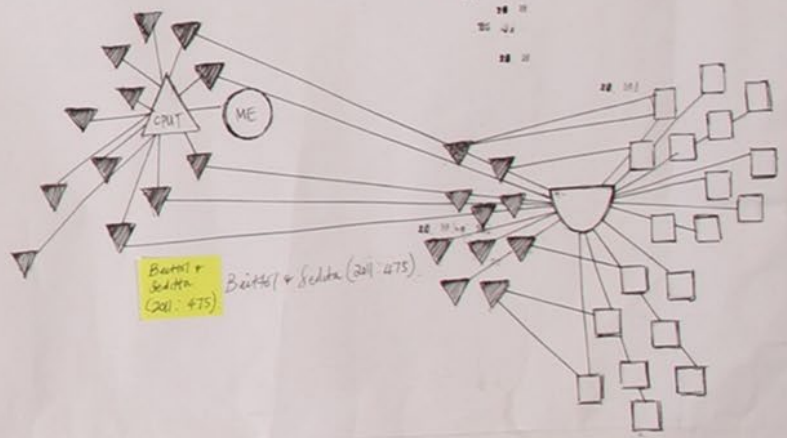
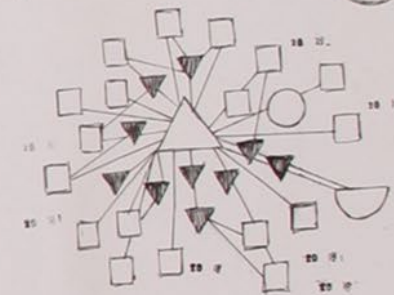


# Theory of Sensemaking.

- Darwin's Sense-making Theory
- Capability Theory
- Transformation Design Research
- Reflection practice - Schön



- △ CPIT
- ME
- ✗ COMMUNITY
- ▴ STUDENTS
- ◐ CENTRE
- PARTICIPANTS



The exhibition was considered a remarkable success. Half of my artworks were sold, and that is what most artists use as a measure of validation, elevating one's mood. My artwork made an impression on the viewers in the art world.

*I was not isolated but recognised and seen. I could fly confidently, being comfortable in my artist role in a space where I could flourish.*

At the beginning of 2018, I was invited by my main supervisor to travel to Leeds University for a month as part of the PARTY project exchange visits. This visit allowed me to focus on developing my PhD proposal and to meet regularly with my supervisors for input and guidance. On my visual map, I depicted the kilometres I travelled from South Africa to the UK twice by sewing the distances on the reflection map. My first travel to the UK was in black, and the second in red.

*It was at that stage that my nestling started, similar to a small bird just hatched from an egg, nestling by staying in the nest, not yet ready to fly. This became the metaphor of my journey, starting my PhD nestling in my woven nest as I moved to different spaces towards becoming a researcher.*





On arrival for my first UK travel, I waited at Leeds station for Uber collection to take me to the hotel. Exhausted from the long journey, I slowly dragged my luggage towards the Uber collection and drop-off door. I was not aware of the fixed metal seating behind me. I stepped back, fell, and broke my ankle. The pain was intense, and an ambulance collected me. The doctor at the hospital provided painkillers and bed rest, with my foot elevated day and night, with strict orders not to walk on it for three weeks.

This left me trapped in my hotel room. I felt like I was an actress in a war movie, hiding in a bomb shelter. However, I was well taken care of by the hotel staff, who delivered my meals, as well as by my main supervisor. Being in a fixed state, nestling, my lived experience changed, as my reduced mobility allowed me to work on and focus on my proposal without any interference.

*Being stuck in my hotel room provided a safe space for my nestling, allowing me to artistically envisage my research proposal.*

To overcome my insecurity about writing in words, I visually and artistically portrayed my entire proposal on paper, which I pasted over all available space in the room to view from distance and engage with for better understanding. My supervisors held regular meetings to engage with the word-and-image artistic approach to ascertain my progress and to provide feedback and guidance.

Although my hotel room as a safe space provided me with enough time to conceptualise my proposed PhD, cabin fever began to set in. I desperately needed to get outside, hobbling along just to see other people and appreciate the fresh air.

I reflected on my engagement with the proposal research on my large diary/map. My proposal became my hatched egg, clutched in a nest of three eggs depicting my three roles. During the nestling period, I lay in a woven home, interlaced with new insights on the literature review and methodology, guided by my supervisors' knowledge and experience, whom I refer to as incubators. I completed my PhD proposal within that month, in accord with by my incubators, ready for defence. In addition, I applied for study leave for two years with assistance from my main supervisor, and it was awarded.

During the June/July recess, a colleague, third year students, parents, and I had been working for two years towards raising funds for the students to go to Japan for their mandatory experiential training for three weeks. Being in Japan, time stood still. The beauty of the scenery, the harmony of nature and tradition, and the deep sense of peace enveloped me. Reflecting, the memory of that experience still gives me goosebumps, a reminder of Japan's unique ability to blend the mystical with the everyday, leaving an indelible mark on my soul and serving as an inspiration for my artwork.

*My identity as an artist was enhanced by this experience, of being in a space of harmony and beauty. As an artist I did not need nestling, and I was able to fly with confidence.*

#### **4.3 Venturing into research, engaging with the field**

A small amount of funding was procured to pilot face-to-face NEET youth creative workshops. Ethical clearance has previously been granted under the PARTY committee (Participatory Development with the Youth). This contributed to my understanding that ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process, embedded in all aspects of my work.

The socio-economic and cultural background of youth in that underserved setting was dire. Marked by poverty, over one million children relied on social grants, with 32% living in poverty. Families faced challenges: 32% were single-parent households, 24% lived with other family members, and 4% with non-family members. Health issues included 6.2% affected by HIV/AIDS and high alcohol abuse rates. Education suffered with a 28.6% dropout rate. Violence was widespread, with family criminality, 28.7% school-based violence, gang activities, and sexual violence. The cultural landscape was diverse, with multiple cultures, languages, and many refugees. These statistics were provided a few years ago and may have increased.

It was an exciting start towards teaching youth creative skills using sustainable materials, and at the same time my research became real as I began data collection. As a result of their circumstances, it became clear that NEET youth needed positive development. Interested participants attended all the daily creative workshops, engaging in diverse creative activities with appreciation and excitement, eager to learn these creative skills for future sustainability. Moreover, it was observed that individuals participating in the pilot creative workshops from the target group generally carried an emotional burden due to their circumstances and the hopelessness of their situation. This highlighted the importance for researchers to always remain mindful of such factors when conducting research. My engagement in Afrikaans with the NEET youth community in that environment made the participants feel comfortable.

*Although the workshops took place in this harsh setting, with an environment impacted by serious social ills, the venue provided a safe space for the creative activities. The participants could escape their lived realities.*

Unexpected NEET youth walking in presented a minor challenge, causing some of the already completed creative activities to be missed, but they were not excluded. As the creative facilitation progressed, as an artist and teacher, I became acutely aware that while a few walk-ins displayed genuine interest, others joined mainly to receive lunch, which was provided daily to all participants. The environment played a significant role in shaping my lived experience.

This observation deepened my understanding of the participants' needs and the issues facing NEET youth, fostering empathy and a sense of social responsibility.

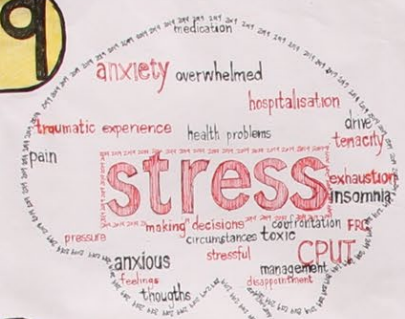
*However, as much as I enjoyed the relationships formed with the youth participants, it was still mostly from an artist-and-teacher perspective. My research experience was still perceived as nestling as I cautiously moved towards becoming a researcher.*

*The creative workshop experience was inspiring, and collecting the data contributed to a shift in my nestling towards becoming a researcher.*

As part of the commitment to leave something behind as a recognition of the community partner and participants' involvement in the research, a public exhibition was held in November 2018 at the university in Cape Town, titled 'Recollection'. All the participants who contributed and completed the pilot creative workshop, together with the community facilitators, attended. It was a humbling experience for me, as the participants could not have imagined that their artworks, made from sustainable materials from their community, were exhibited for the public to see.

*Their proud faces were rewarding for me as an artist and teacher, and a sense of slowly becoming a researcher assured me that my nestling could result in building my confidence as a researcher. A reality that threatened to derail my PhD journey with the worst was still to come.*

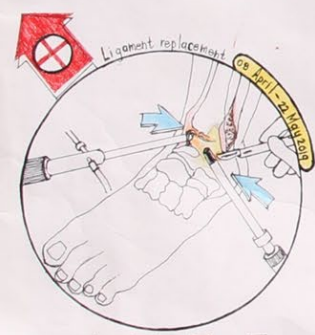
2019



12 Months study leave + R 200000,00



6 months reduced to 3 months confrontation

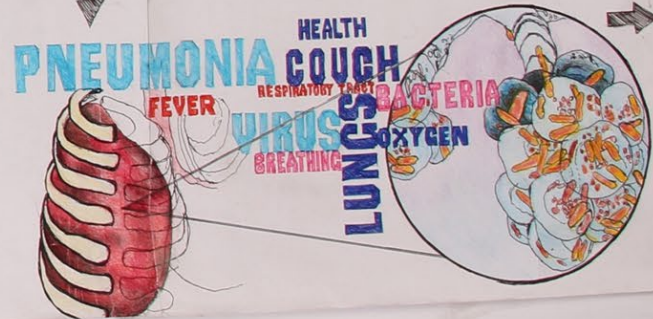
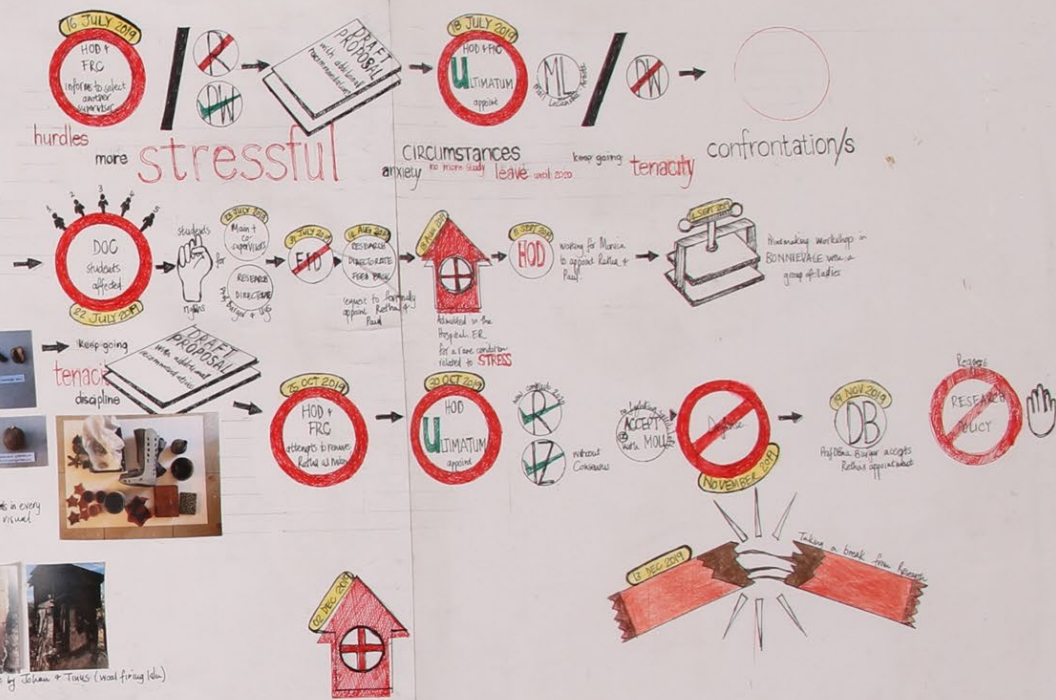


NO RESEARCH



My visit to Limpopo was to access data from this case study to guide my framework (Artistic/Serial). The project ran from 2004 - 2008 by TITUS BOSHOFF & JOHAN VERSTER. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VALUE ADDED TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE THE CERAMIC PRODUCE OF EXISTING INDIGENOUS POTTERS IN S.A. LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

- Worked with Basotho & Venda communities
- Facilitated the process
- Transfer of indigenous knowledge with existing potters
- Transfer of knowledge to primary school kids
- WHAT: Improvement of technical knowledge, improved firing methods, refine existing aesthetics & design
- AIM: to improve their products without changing their identity to better sustain themselves
- Other projects facilitated with San community in Platfontein & Andriavatu. Disciplines included: textile printing
- Encountered many problems: changing management views, not enough funding received for marketing, perceived as a racist individuals offered



#### 4.4 Relations and spaces that shaped my identity

*Slowly my nest that I had carefully woven as a safe space became increasingly influenced by the environment of my lived reality.*

Towards the end of 2018, I was diagnosed with pneumonia and was hospitalised for two weeks. My lung capacity was 10%, which was extremely concerning. I was never afraid of dying, but my lived experience of gasping for air and lack of oxygen was terrifying. In my mind, my exit journey from this world was planned so as to pass on softly in my sleep. I was fortunate to recover.

In 2019, I remained incubated by my supervisors with my completed proposal in my woven home in place, ready and waiting for a date to defend it. After my main supervisor's retirement at the end of 2018, both supervisors were still willing to be my incubators. The faculty research committee decided that for me to defend my proposal, I had to choose a new main supervisor from a full-time staff member at the university, but I was allowed to retain my external co-supervisor. I felt threatened because this choice was an instruction without any introduction and consultation with me or my existing main supervisor.

This was not how I envisioned my research to unfold. I was meant to hatch after incubation and defend my proposal.

*I was plucked from my carefully incubated nest and expected to function within a new nest determined by the department and faculty, with a focus on compliance with the rules and regulations of the institution, policies for teaching, learning and research.*

*Since research had always abide by the teaching priorities, I felt unsupported and lost with little space for my artist and emerging researcher roles, dominated by heavy teaching loads.*

I was destined to teach; it was my passion, but having to do this under the circumstances was becoming increasingly challenging. As years passed, my lived experiences in this artificial nest with colleagues were a learning curve; I came to realise which colleagues shared the same values as mine. Like-minded colleagues found solace in teaching, which also became my safe space in this artificial nest. However, the nest was situated in a toxic environment, which undermined colleagues' sense-of-togetherness and well-being.

My research experience at the university was incredibly stressful. My proposal remained in the incubation phase for more than a year. Hopes of becoming a researcher were unsettling. I was left in limbo, still not able to hatch because of the decisions made by the faculty's research committee. My experience in research at that time was the most stressful experience

in my life. There was no support from the faculty, the HOD, and the faculty research committee. I felt like a helpless string puppet being manipulated to perform research in an uncontrolled space that denied me having a say, not knowing the outcome of who my supervisors would be.

I was not going to give up, and I continued working on my literature review, since I was not willing to let go of my incubators. Eventually, the faculty decision was challenged at a higher level by my main supervisor, and a decision to keep both my supervisors as originally appointed was reached based on the fact that they were part of the conceptualising of the study. There was light and a huge amount of relief. I had to wait an entire year with my proposal being ready before I was allowed to defend it. Without being allowed to continue with my actual research, I continued reading the literature that ultimately proved unnecessary. I could not defend my proposal, as proposal defences were only held at certain times of the year, and the last defence for 2019 had already concluded. I had to wait for the first available dates in 2020, and in the meantime, I went back into incubation.

To conclude, the year 2019 was tense. Most importantly, it presented a significant barrier that hindered my research progress.

*I had to dig deep to remain positive. Through the experience I lived, I learnt not to give up, to endure, to be tenacious, and disciplined. This experience also disclosed the importance of retaining the supervisors you began with, as together they are the custodians of the research journey.*

*My relationships with like-minded colleagues and students contributed positively to my teaching role, and my relationship with my supervisors contributed to my renewed determination to become a researcher. My lived experience in my work environment was negatively impacted by the colleagues in authority positions in the faculty who threatened to destroy my sense of safety in my carefully woven nest towards becoming a researcher. I felt safe in my nest, but it was still located in an unsupported environment.*

#### **4.5 Being confronted with technology**

Living in a digital world and having to use technology in my workplace, I decided to master the technologies available to researchers to benefit from these. This meant that I had to confront my fear of technologies and learn to master them. I spent a lot of time learning the intricacies of ATLAS.ti and used it to code my literature. It took me long to master it, but the biggest benefit for me was that it forced me to read vast amounts of literature, gaining valuable insights. However, my experience with ATLAS.ti was extremely time-consuming, and because the themes were not yet in a presentable form, it excluded my supervisors from my thought

processes, causing them to become frustrated and finding it difficult to guide me. This experience made me realise that as much as I was proud of mastering the technology, it never became part of my research practice. I now know that I can master any new technologies and I can certainly see their benefits, but I will probably never have enough confidence to explain it to others.

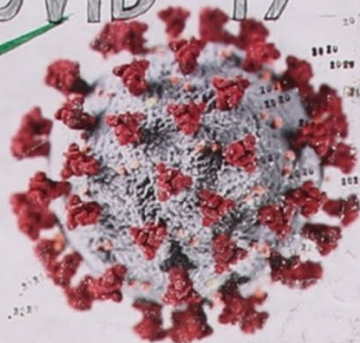
I found it helpful to use Mendeley to manage my references as a good storage space. However, it took too much time to keep uploading more references and with my focus on finishing my study, I did not continue to use it. I found VOSviewer as a visualisation of the scientific landscape of my study – useful, but I did not use it myself. I was specifically interested in the role of art in research, with an indication of a possible niche area for further research. I was surprised with the results because I expected links to depict the relationships between the different concepts. Without the links, a possible contribution could be to connect the clusters in further research. I decided to include it as part of my literature review.

I found the use of a chat platform such as WhatsApp, as well as a virtual classroom such as MS Teams, as necessary during the pandemic, and, having experienced it during that time, I am now confident in using these when needed. However, I find that I prefer face-to-face relations with others, which I feel is better suited for teaching creative skills.



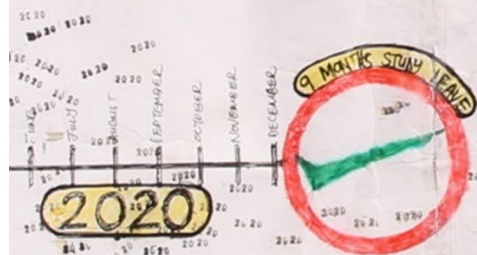
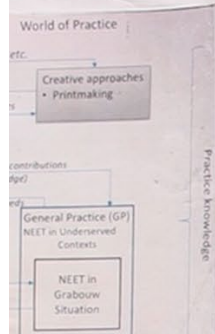
In Natal who had traveled from Italy. The daily  
 as perfection needed to be questioned together  
 at the time. Soon after Benidone Cyril Rousapha  
 internal navigating response was there keeping citizens aware  
 time. In week one we were sitting in to our home  
 the second week people were terrified. Panicked  
 had to be addressed. The days felt like minutes it  
 see anyone, family, friends & colleagues.  
 it was huge. I can remember standing in  
 the streets see barriers, no people no cars  
 was strange, scary and I felt claustrophobic  
 the streets & the city. It was like humans were  
 gone.

# COVID-19



## CORONAVIRUS-19 SARS-COV-19

### MAY 2020



Plot drawing group

| Participant    | Seed 14.1 | Final drawing | Q1: What you enjoyed doing about the exercise?                                                                 | Q2: What were your challenges?                                                                                           | Q3: Did you understand the exercise? | Q4: Indicate medium and paper used?                                                                                 | Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------|-----------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enry Alexander |           |               | To be challenged to draw                                                                                       | Creating shadows and a tracing template for the outline would have been helpful because it would have helped with ratios | Yes                                  | Pencil on tracing paper                                                                                             | Enry is eccentric and especially creative in his dress sense. He has a degree in Food Service Management. In my view his drawing ability is average but he perceives that he is not.                                                                                                                      |
| Lara Massmann  |           |               | Loved being forced to sit down and pencilise drawing over all the other mundane tasks I usually would be doing | Felt stressed because of COVID restrictions. Juggling working from home and home schooling                               | Yes                                  | Sketching in Photoshop. Used layered images from web, dust and dirt. Simple outline for seed and overlaid - brushes | Lara has a degree in Fine Art specialising in painting. She is working at Woodworths in the design department. Her drawing ability is excellent but she chose to utilize a computer program. Photoshop to illustrate the seed. I found this very exciting. I thought when her drawing abilities are good. |

**MAY 2020**

| Participant     | Seed 1.4.1 | Final drawing | Q1: What you enjoyed doing about the exercise?                                                                        | Q2: What were your challenges?                                                                     | Q3: Did you understand the exercise? | Q4: Indicate medium and paper used?                                         | Comments                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enry Alexander  |            | No drawing    |                                                                                                                       | Busy with exams and could not complete his drawing                                                 | Yes                                  |                                                                             |                                                                                                                                      |
| Lara Massmann   |            |               | My AMAC gave in and waiting for Woodworths to repair or replace Extension needed                                      | Realising that working in black. Realising you need to be more careful. It allows for few mistakes | Yes                                  | Sketching in Photoshop. Covered in biomorphic and white also to get texture |                                                                                                                                      |
| Marlon George   |            |               | Being placed out of my comfort zone and just drawing                                                                  | Realising that working in black. Realising you need to be more careful. It allows for few mistakes | Yes                                  | Black fine liner on their mounting board (triple)                           |                                                                                                                                      |
| Raon Davids     |            | No drawing    |                                                                                                                       | Raon excluded himself from the drawing exercise. His entire workload was overwhelming              | None                                 | None                                                                        |                                                                                                                                      |
| Penny George    |            |               | Being in a creative space is my safe space                                                                            | Consistently managing stress levels                                                                | Yes                                  | Charcoal pencil on Fabriano paper                                           | I learned from the group that the week was challenging and extended the due date                                                     |
| Shabane Ndabane |            |               |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                    | Yes                                  | Types printer paper. Available pencils                                      | new participant. She has a Masters in Textile Design and a job                                                                       |
| Marlon George   |            |               | Enjoyed the challenge because it is not something you do everyday                                                     | Trying to draw when you have a toddler is quite challenging                                        | Yes                                  | Pencil pencil on photocopy paper                                            | Marlon has a degree in Food Service management and specialises in being a culinary pastry chef. His drawing ability is above average |
| Raon Davids     |            | No drawing    |                                                                                                                       | Managing home and work stress. No will                                                             | Yes                                  | None                                                                        | Raon is a practicing Jeweller and has a degree in Jewellery                                                                          |
| Penny George    |            |               | Being in a creative space for a few hours in ones day is an escape from reality. Just to reflect with your inner self | Managing stress levels                                                                             | Yes                                  | Charcoal pencil on Fabriano paper                                           |                                                                                                                                      |

Week 3

| Participant     | Seed 6.1.7. Blind contour drawing + video | Final drawing | Q1: What you enjoyed doing about the exercise? | Q2: What were your challenges?                                                       | Q3: Did you understand the exercise? | Q4: Indicate medium and paper used?      | Comments                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enry Alexander  |                                           | No drawing    |                                                | Busy with exams and could not complete his drawing                                   | Yes                                  |                                          |                                                                                                          |
| Lara Massmann   |                                           |               |                                                |                                                                                      | Yes                                  | Pencil on paper                          |                                                                                                          |
| Marlon George   |                                           |               | The complexity of the seed choice              | I found this exercise the most challenging and daunting. Juggling work and parenting | Yes                                  | Pencil pencil on triple                  | The exercise was a blind contour drawing. He did not understand the exercise. This drawing is perceptive |
| Penny George    |                                           |               | Being in a creative space is my safe space     | Consistently managing stress levels                                                  | Yes                                  | Pencil charcoal pencil on Fabriano paper | This exercise was posted a week later. The COVID restrictions took a toll on me together with deadlines  |
| Shabane Ndabane |                                           |               |                                                |                                                                                      | Yes                                  | Types printer paper. Available pencils   |                                                                                                          |



## **4.6 When the unthinkable happened and the global world became unsafe**

There were murmurs of a pneumonia outbreak for which the cause was unknown. On 31 December 2019, authorities in Wuhan, Hubei Province informed the regional World Health Organisation (WHO) office. Seven days later, 7 of January 2020, China reported that the pneumonia outbreak was caused by a new coronavirus strain related to severe acute respiratory syndromes.

Stringent lockdowns were implemented in many countries, including South Africa. A national lockdown was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 23 March 2020, to commence on 27 March 2020 for 21 days, which eventually spanned over a period of nearly two years. The COVID-19 pandemic environment was marked by widespread health concerns, lockdowns, social distancing, mask-wearing, remote work and schooling, economic disruptions, and an emphasis on hygiene and later vaccination efforts.

*I had no choice in my nestling process and found facing an unknown future in the pandemic. Interwoven with the COVID-19 environment, living and functioning became difficult in this new reality.*

Reminiscing, this period of the unknown was hard to comprehend, almost surreal. Since I was living through the pandemic, it was not possible at the time to narrate my lived experience fully because of the daily changing devastating effects on my life, loss of friends, financial difficulties, and my emotional well-being. My research almost came to a standstill during the lockdown period, but I endured and revisited my literature review and continued working on it. Approval of study leave for nine months from April to December 2020 was granted. On 20 May 2020, I could defend my proposal online together with the support of my supervisors, my incubators. I was the first to defend virtually, and the academics still needed to become used to functioning in a virtual environment as the only means of engagement.

I presented my PowerPoint presentation of my proposed study; only one question was asked, and my proposal was approved. This was a strange experience. I expected more, seeing that it was a PhD proposal defence and that I would have to respond to harsh criticism from other researchers in the faculty. In hindsight, I was relieved with the result.

*Nevertheless, I remained a hatchling, dependent on both my incubators to guide me through my research journey, assisting me in becoming a researcher. The journey was long and frustrating due to circumstances beyond my control.*

### **4.6.1 Reflections during the pandemic**

Throughout the pandemic, many challenges arose. The lockdowns at various levels in 2020 created uncertainty that became mentally and emotionally stressful. This stress impacted my research focus and performance. Once again, I found myself having to dig deep and initiate

an online creative workshop. Despite my eagerness to engage with the latest innovations, I always found myself struggling with a constant barrier: my lack of knowledge and confidence in using technology.

During the pandemic, I ventured into using the social media platform WhatsApp. Teaching online was the new norm during the COVID-19 period.

I created a pilot online drawing platform with a group of six friends over three weeks, using a different seed to draw weekly. The aim of this online drawing exercise was first to assess whether a creative online drawing activity was viable; second, to find and use materials that were available to them; and third, to build my confidence about my limited ability with technology, so as to prepare another online creative workshop for my research continuation and for data collection.

Participants reflected on their enjoyment of 'doing' and 'being' creative and highlighted the high levels of stress they endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. They cited reasons for not completing their seed drawings, such as constant in-house entertainment with their children.

#### **4.7 The hatchling's journey to becoming a researcher in an online environment**

In June/July 2020, a creative online workshop was suggested and launched with NEET youth to ensure continuation towards becoming a researcher. Knowing my barrier with technology, a research assistant with technology knowledge assisted with all the technological aspects of the online creative workshop. Data vouchers were allocated to NEET youth who agreed to participate. The online environment that I had piloted worked. In this environment, I had to be particularly mindful of engaging with NEET youth who were already dealing with many difficulties in addition to their lived experiences during the pandemic. The online platform presented several challenges.

My lived experience with the online participants was challenging as many participants became inactive. The most prominent reason I observed was their socio-economic circumstances in the context of the underserved community, compounded by the pandemic, indicating that they might have used the data for more pressing matters. The online creative workshops, which inherently required a hands-on approach were constrained by their virtual nature.

The participants who took part in and completed the creative online workshop were grateful for the opportunity, but they expressed a preference for face-to-face interaction, believing it would have improved their drawing results in that setting. The data analysis, overseen by the research assistant, yielded valuable insights.

*In that year, I also contracted COVID-19. It started with shortness of breath, gasping for air. I was wary of hearing from close family and friends about how they*

*lost their loved ones to these exact symptoms. Once again, I survived but could relate to the losses.*

*During this period, I often felt like an outsider, as my experiences as both an artist and teacher were compromised by the lack of face-to-face interaction.*

A face-to-face creative workshop was planned towards the end of the year as less restrictive regulations were implemented. Sadly, the two facilitators involved as partners from the community succumbed to the virus, and another face-to-face creative workshop was not possible.

The insights gained from this online drawing activity were valuable in emphasising the importance of a face-to-face mode for teaching creative skills. There was a need for a physical space where participants could engage with the teacher and each other in real-time, providing a hands-on experience with the materials to create artworks. This also implied that the social relationships between the teacher and participants, as well as among the participants themselves, were stronger than in a virtual space where immediate responses were lacking and non-verbal cues were not easily detected.

#### **4.8 Another transition opportunity into another space**

Again, my PhD journey took a new turn towards becoming a researcher, as I had to find an alternative setting to continue my fieldwork. We partnered with a rehabilitation facility in a rural town that provides rehabilitation services to persons with a drug addiction problem. Because these persons were from compromised contexts, the facility relies on government and donor funding to provide much-needed services to those unable to afford private services.

*At last, I could continue with my nestling, and I was excited to apply my new insights and experiences.*

I was very excited to finally facilitate introductory sustainable printing techniques and the creative process of body mapping. I arrived in the space, thinking like an artist and teacher, ready to work alongside the group and impart my creative knowledge to teach them skills through creative processes. However, I soon realised that substance-dependant individuals contextual factors were quite different from those of the NEET youth participants, which was an oversight on my part. I was ill-prepared for what was to come when engaging in this environment.

*Again, my nest was in another environment, and I had to adjust to new circumstances.*

Situationally, the context of both cases was considered. Their socio-economic environmental factors influenced the participants' lived realities, providing the reader with insight into the

circumstances I experienced as the researcher. My approach sought to form relationships, as the research relied on these social connections with the participants, and the difficulties encountered in practice were documented.

My lived experience in this particular environment was complex. There were many barriers that I had to overcome working with this group. As a result, my initial weekly schedule needed adjustment to accommodate the rehabilitation facility's strict timelines. The language barrier needed to be considered, as the participants came from different cultural backgrounds.

The biggest adjustment was to build a trusting relationship with the participants who were unsure about the reasons for their participation. Trust had to be earned, since they were afraid of exposing themselves outside the rehabilitation process. The body mapping activity resulted in intense emotional responses. The thought-provoking questions about their life experiences during their childhood, documented in their reflection books, stirred deep emotions in many participants, resulting in emotional responses that also affected my own emotions.

The purpose of the body mapping activity was to provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their own experience, and although it can also be used as a therapeutic method, it was not the case for this research. It was therefore important to move away from the emotional responses and rather focus *on the positive aspects to counter the difficult personal experiences*.

I had to be flexible in adjusting the methods to respond to the participants' needs and had to continuously renegotiate the terms of engagement between us. They also lacked confidence in using the creative methods to express themselves, and I had to continuously encourage them. It was very rewarding when the one with the least confidence could express himself, showing a talent for drawing that has not been explored before.

Although I had to adhere to very strict ethical requirements when proposing my study, I was still not ready for the ethical challenges I had to deal with in such a situation in practice. An example is the problem of using a craft knife and turpentine in teaching printmaking. The art therapist of the facility cautioned me to only supply sharp printmaking utensils when the printmaking (lino cutting) was scheduled on the planner. Strict rules for equipment handling were vital, and I had to assume a policing role that made it difficult to facilitate the creative processes.

It is clear that researchers need to understand ethical behaviour in different situations to know how to respond to challenges in practice that a yes/no questionnaire cannot guarantee. Relationships between the researcher and participants need to be formed on a sound ethical basis.

It is not easy to find research settings with partners who are willing to participate in a research study, since time is typically limited and many of them suffer from research fatigue, having participated in research studies before without a clear benefit to them. The relationship between the researcher and research partners representing a community or organisation needs to be managed continuously to ensure transparency and clear benefits.

#### **4.9 Final stages of my nestling process**

My experience of working on my thesis for the last two years occurred in a hostile teaching environment as a result of the oversubscribed student numbers in the Extended Curriculum Programme. Pleading for additional teaching support fell on deaf ears. Being understaffed in the programme left me focusing solely on teaching, learning, programme coordinator duties, and heavy administrative responsibilities, with hardly any consideration for research time. The (a-r-t) well-being was negatively affected, and research progress was impeded. One of our colleagues suddenly resigned in mid-2024 due to the inadequate support and its impact on her well-being.

I was confronted with the written word, which brought back insecurities, until I realised that I could foreground my artist role and express my research artistically. My need to be creative, which sat uneasily with the written word, could not be ignored, as it was an intrinsic component of my identity. The writing retreats offered through the University platform were incredibly helpful in forming strong relations and friendships with peers; they motivated, supported, and enabled us to learn and collaborate with one another. These were among the highlights of my research journey.

#### **4.10 Reflections on the ethics in autoethnographic studies**

Qualitative researchers should constantly reflect on incidents and ethical issues in their studies to prevent future mistakes. Ethical research is rooted in principles that protect participants' rights and safety. Ethics in creative processes can be problematic when an artist engages a community solely to create art together. Addressing issues of ethical responsibility regarding my individual artist intentions was crucial because the projected needs and concerns of the creative workshop exploration could be negatively impacted otherwise.

Because the researcher concurrently held the interwoven roles of artist, researcher, and teacher inside the inquiry, relational ethics were especially important in a/r/tographic practice employing autoethnography.

*The researcher held the interwoven roles of artist-researcher-teacher, relational ethics were particularly salient for (a-r-t) in A/R/Tographic practice using autoethnography*

The (a-r-t) in autoethnography must always consider relational concerns, keeping this analysis in mind to protect the privacy and safety of others. The integrity of the research was paramount; by including my personal experience, I am automatically implicated in my research journey. My intimate association with the partakers and the social connections I formed with research participants and other stakeholders involved in the study must be an authentic reflection of the study's conclusion.

#### *Research ethics during the pandemic*

The pandemic disrupted lives and research, forcing researchers to navigate the unknown with no ethical guidance. The (a-r-t) adapted an online creative-process workshop to the new conditions while maintaining ethical standards. This demonstrated that conducting research under challenging conditions and persisting with it can yield promising advances in research ethics.

Social ethics were embraced, leading to new ways of engaging with participants, amplifying their voices, and adapting research processes to better meet their needs. Conversely, the pandemic heightened researchers' creativity and awareness of opportunity, enhancing their innovativeness and flexibility. This led to more inclusive and responsive engagement with participants.

#### **4.11 CARER's lived experience observations**

*Findings from my lived experience of becoming a researcher as complementary to my artist and teaching roles.*

- My new enhanced identity includes being a researcher in addition to being first an artist and second a teacher, without replacing who I am. From: an Artist (A) to artist-teacher (A-T) to artist-researcher-teacher (CARER).
- My cognitive experiences within my CARER roles are marked by standout thoughts and feelings, sparking creative inspiration that drives my innovative approaches.
- As a CARER, I recognise the need to build trusting relationships, seek support from like-minded colleagues and peers, and value the guidance of supportive supervisors.
- As a CARER, I need a nurturing environment, a nest, to incubate me, as novice researcher, and guide me towards becoming an independent researcher. The environment is typically layered with global influences, such as the pandemic, and university spaces over which I had little control, emphasising the need for a protective nest to safeguard my research journey. Community spaces provided opportunities to support others, while dedicated spaces like retreats, hotel rooms or guest houses

allowed for uninterrupted thinking and writing. The importance of a safe space became evident, highlighting the need to mediate and limit the impact of stressors.

- Engaging in artistic expressions, teaching creative processes, and reflecting on experiences were crucial activities in my research journey.
- Physical challenges, such as personal illness, tested my resilience, required me to maintain my focus.
- Although technology played a challenging role, it required responsible use while navigating the learning curve and adapting to new tools.

#### 4.12 CARER's lived experience findings

In the table below the findings, linked to the themes are summarized.

**Table 4-1: Autoethnography findings.**

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lived experience | The CARER's lived experiences are shaped by the different layers of the environments that foster creativity and provide nurturing support. The transition from being an artist to art teacher, and becoming an arts-based teacher-researcher shaped one's identity. This enhanced identity is associated with standout thoughts and creative inspiration based on the influences of trusting relations with others.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Space            | A safe and nurturing space is needed for the transition process of identity changes to allow for reflexive growth. This is especially important when a person's wellbeing state is compromised by external environmental factors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| CARER (identity) | During the identity transition process, the roles of teacher and researcher were integrated alongside the artist identity, ensuring that the core essence of being an artist—creating valuable artwork using materials from one's environment responsibly—remained central to being an art teacher, and arts-based researcher.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Reflections      | Through a conscious and systematic examination of one's own assumptions, beliefs, and experiences in a particular situation makes it possible to change one's practices. Reflecting on one's artist, teacher and researcher identities separately, as well as on how each shapes the others allow for valuable insights in fostering creativity in others. Becoming aware of others' lived realities allows for an informed and suitable approach to nurture creative potential grounded in relevant research.                                                                                                                                   |
| Creativity       | Through creative processes, creativity became a tool for artistic expression, empowering vulnerable individuals to nurture their creative skills for potential opportunities and hope. Creative processes, with their inherent flexibility, can be leveraged to tailor teaching approaches and unlock the untapped creative potential of individuals in specific situations. This involves adapting teaching methods to suit diverse learning styles and needs. Creativity as artistic expression often uses personal symbols as metaphors to disclose meaning, such as the preference for circular symbols to represent a nest as a safe space. |
| Participation    | Active participation requires understanding others' perspectives, being empathetic, and adapting teaching approaches accordingly. Creating a safe and supportive space with a manageable group size is crucial for fostering trust and enabling effective collaboration.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Challenges       | The research journey as a growth opportunity was influenced by personal, institutional, contextual, and technological challenges that required resilience and focus to overcome. Relying on technology aggravated the teaching of creative processes that were new to the participants. While the research journey offered significant growth opportunities, navigating personal, institutional, contextual, and technological challenges demanded                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | unwavering resilience and focus. Notably, the reliance on technology sometimes hindered the teaching of new creative processes to participants, as it could inadvertently stifle their creative exploration and experimentation with something new to them. |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



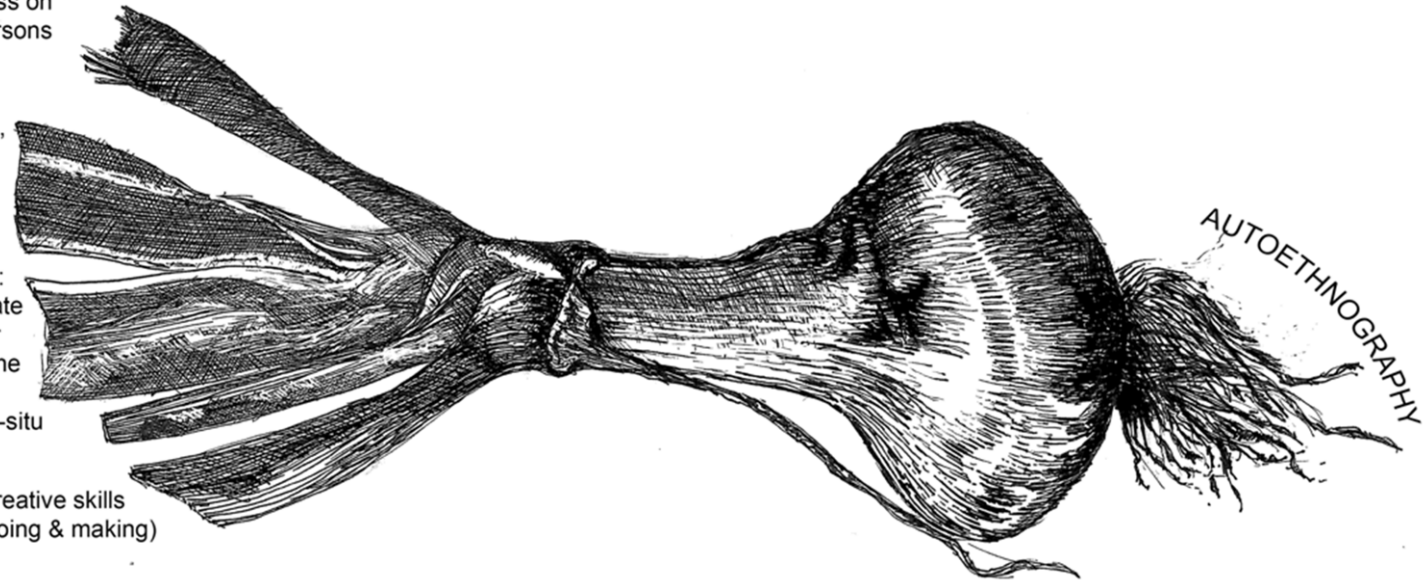
Artography to reflect & express on  
lived experience of NEET persons

1. Artist – artistically express the study, its concepts,  
the research and art-making processes with data  
collection analysis and findings based on  
observations and reflections

2. Researcher – conduct situational inquiry through:  
**Arts-based research** to enable participants to create  
and interpret art as they explore and reflect on their  
lived experiences through a creative process with the  
new creative skills gained

**Interpretive phenomenology** to understand the in-situ  
lived experiences of the participants

**Teacher** – teach participants new creative skills  
using creative methods (knowing, doing & making)



#### 4.13 Conclusion: My lived experience of becoming a researcher as part of my CARER identity

Despite finding autoethnography an initially unknown and challenging research approach, understanding my own lived experiences eventually enabled me to interpret participants' experiences in compromised contexts. I employed creative processes through images and words. Autoethnography proved to be a valuable phenomenological tool in qualitative research, linking my personal experiences to the cultural context and providing deeper insights and perceptions into subjective phenomena. Participants' reflections from this study revealed that understanding one's intercultural competence involves ongoing critical self-reflection.

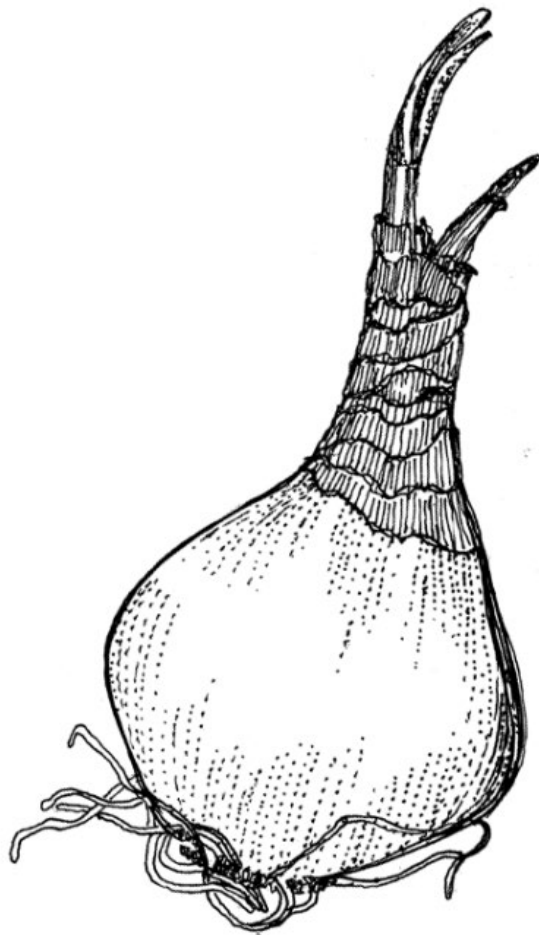
Additionally, the pandemic significantly impacted vulnerable populations, accentuating the need for creative interventions and support. Considering subjective well-being and coping strategies, developing resilience became crucial for navigating these challenges.

To conclude, through the (a-r-t) process, I became a researcher resilient enough to handle life struggles that threatened to derail me during my research. My journey towards becoming a researcher was an evolving process, informed and shaped by moving through different context-specific spaces. Consequently, I could claim an intertwined identity of artist-researcher-teacher (a-r-t).

*Being an artist was intrinsically who I am, the source of my inspiration, strength, and energy. I could never be a teacher without using art as the inspiration and means to uncover and refine artistic capabilities in others. Similarly, I could only be a researcher by conceptualising my research, conducting the research process, interpreting the findings, and expressing the results from an artist's perspective. I needed a safe space to protect myself from external influences and strong relationships with like-minded people to function optimally. The bird is ready to fly.*



## CHAPTER 5: FIELDWORK



## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises data from online sustainable creative processes with involving NEET youth in underserved communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, data were collected from substance users in compromised contexts through face-to-face sustainable creative printing techniques and body mapping processes.

Data collection and analysis for the study were conducted in stages, following a phased approach. The collected data were qualitatively analysed and re-read and coded through the text, using a combination of predetermined codes and the development of new code lists. This approach allowed for the emergence of concepts, categories, and their interrelationships with other categories through an iterative process of theoretical sampling and constant comparison.

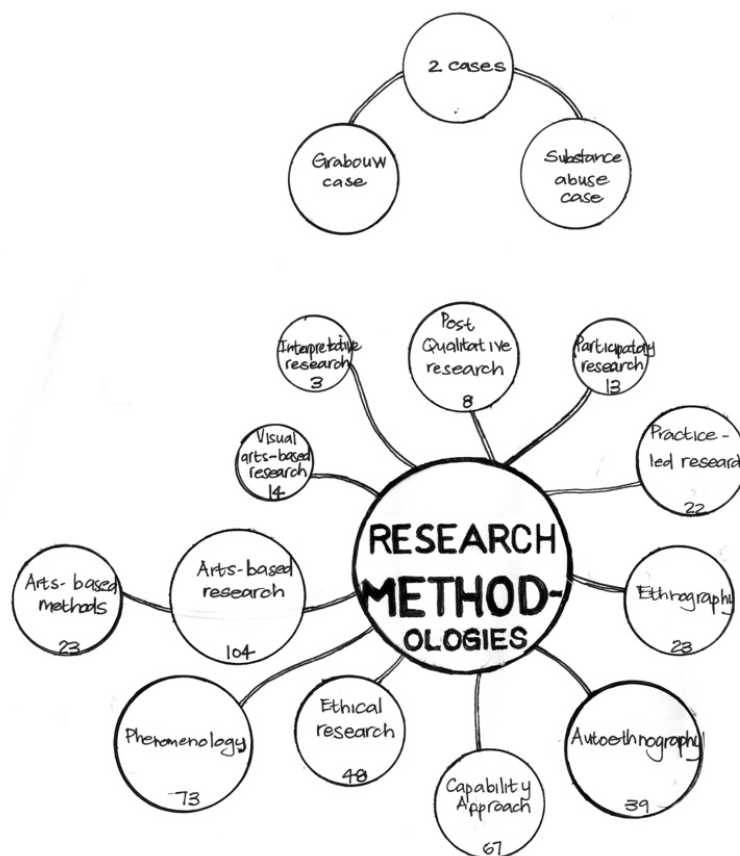


Figure 5-1: Artistic expression of the research methods

The two cases are described separately, from data collection to the presentation of the derived themes for each case.

## 5.2 Case 1: Data collection

This research combines arts-based research (ABR) and A/R/Tography, utilising sustainable printmaking to explore the lived experiences of NEET youth in an underserved context.

The researcher assumed three roles: artist (expressing the research and findings through art), researcher (utilising arts-based research and interpretive phenomenology to understand their *in situ* lived experience), and teacher (instructing participants in new creative skills).

Within the participatory approach to this creative project, it was necessary to be aware of the participants' *in situ* lived experiences, well-being, and to give them hope for future sustainability within the scope of the creative activities.

### **5.2.1 NEET youth contextual understanding – the underserved context**

NEET youth in rural settings face significant challenges, including high unemployment, limited access to education and training, and a scarcity of opportunities for personal and community development. These underserved individuals struggle with economic instability and a sense of hopelessness, which undermines their ability to envision a positive future.

The literature suggests that NEET youth require opportunities for positive development. Although the South African government has well-established programmes in place to foster hope for youth, youth unemployment has accelerated post-COVID, and in 2024, the youth unemployment rate stood at 45.5% (Stats SA, 2025)

The CARER established innovative, sustainable online creative activities to offer hope to NEET youth during COVID-19 and to ensure the continuance of my research. Adherence to COVID-19 rules and regulations was mandatory.

### **5.2.2 NEET youth: identifying and recruiting the participants**

NEET youth were recruited through our NGO partners in the rural town, as they know the community best. Participation was voluntary and free. No one was excluded based on any criteria that could be perceived as discriminatory. The target group was NEET young persons between the ages of 18 and 35.

The research assistant of a larger research project worked closely with the NGO partners in the town to invite possible participants. One of the main tasks was also to assess which of the participants had smartphones to allow for online participation, since data collection started soon after the pandemic globally disrupted social and economic practices. NEET youth were also recruited via online platforms. Efforts were made to recruit a representative group of participants, and those who previously participated in the face-to-face creative pilot workshop were encouraged to inform other youth. Snowball sampling was used.

A Facebook group was created to provide a social media platform where the youth participants could share their stories and photos of their experiences during the lockdown period of the pandemic. A WhatsApp group was later established to eliminate duplicates, manage data,

eliminate confusion, and engage collectively. WhatsApp was used as the preferred communication platform in that community.

### 5.2.3 Entering the field during COVID

The online pilot creative workshop, implemented with close friends and colleagues during COVID-19, offered valuable (a-r-t) insights, engaging with individuals in stressful life situations using WhatsApp as a social media platform. Perceptions of their lived experiences introduced additional mitigating factors for online creative engagement with NEET youth. No data were collected during the NEET youth face-to-face pilot creative workshop, because its purpose was to pilot the proposed creative methods' usability.

Conducting fieldwork was particularly challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when implementing creative processes on an online platform.

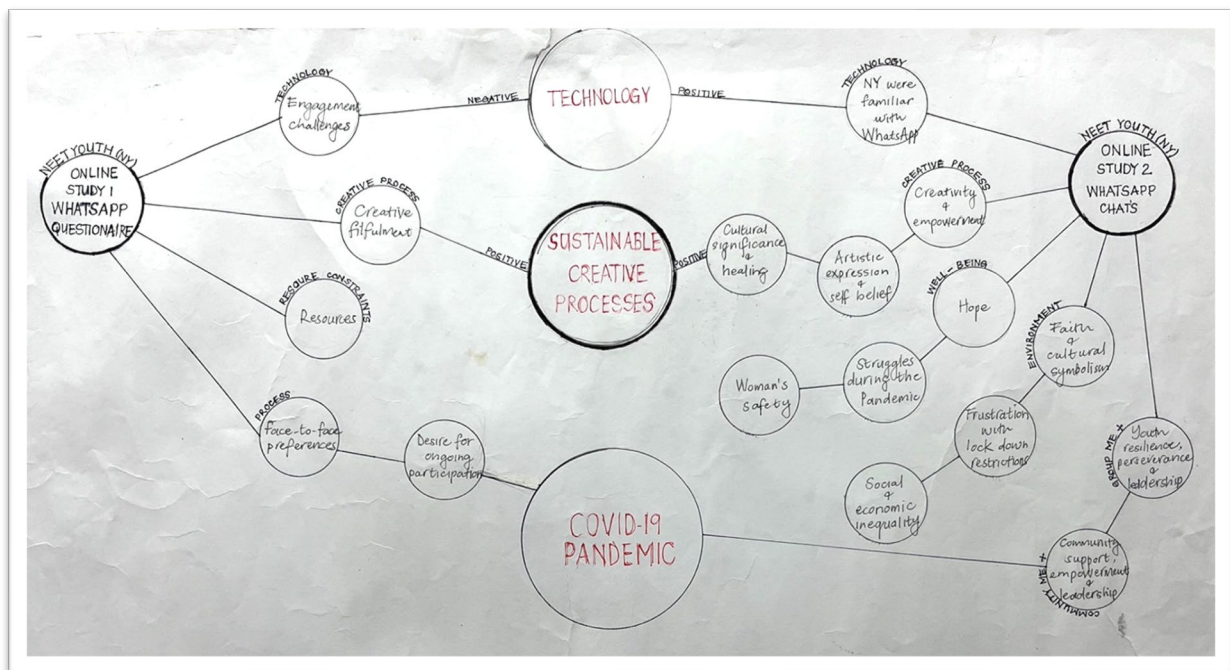


Figure 5-2: Artistic expression of the thematic development

### 5.2.4 Pilot data collected: close friends as participants in COVID-19

In May 2020, the CARER launched an online drawing platform with six participants, including close friends and colleagues. The activities were conducted over three weeks to assess the feasibility of creative data collection online. Using WhatsApp made it possible for the research to continue during COVID-19 Level 3 restrictions. The restrictions curbed our movements, and participants had to use what they had access to, such as paper and drawing materials. The project objective was to implement and identify collaborative design-led digital and creative projects in underserved contexts.

All activities, updates, and discussions were shared via WhatsApp, enabling immediate communication through text, voice messages, images, and calls. Online teaching and research became our new norm, making social media essential for learning and collaboration.

Despite my limited technology skills, WhatsApp proved effective for data collection, which boosted CARER's confidence in using it as a research tool. The insights gained were valuable for the preparation of the NEET sessions. Perceptions of their lived experiences introduced additional mitigating factors into online creative engagement with NEET youth.

#### **5.2.5 Data collection planning – NEET case**

Introductory creative co-participatory sustainable drawing processes during COVID-19 were employed to understand sustainable creative skills development to support reflection on and transformation of underserved contexts, aligned with the CARER's aims. Reflection and the application of a participatory co-creative approach were deeply grounded and fundamental to my research process.

ABR involved participants engaging creatively through introductory sustainable drawing to explore methods of participatory co-creation, reflection, and autoethnography, combined with A/R/Tography, enabling NEET individuals to express their lived experiences through art. ABR facilitated situational inquiry, allowing participants to create and interpret art while reflecting on their experiences during the pandemic, gaining new creative skills. Interpretive phenomenology was employed to understand their lived experiences in context.

An online platform using WhatsApp was necessary for the creative drawing activities to engage with NEET youth through introductory drawing on sustainable materials. Similar to the pilot online drawing activities with friends and family, the CARER posted seeds as drawing inspiration over three weeks.



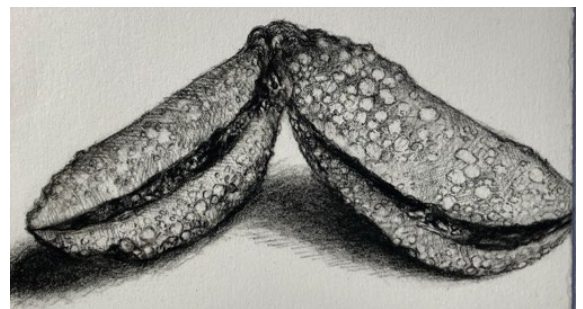


**Figure 5-3: A collage of seeds used in the study.**

From my experience with the pilot online drawing workshop, I was confident in using WhatsApp as a social media platform to engage with NEET youth. Fifty participants aged 18 to 35 were initially identified. Data vouchers were distributed to 37 interested youth who pledged to participate, and they had to agree to the terms and conditions of using the data voucher only for participation in the CPUT social media activities and research-related activities. They undertook to contribute daily to the conversations and activities of the research project. Once they agreed, the vouchers were distributed. Despite this agreement, we realised that it was not feasible to monitor their use of the data for non-research purposes, given their need to connect with others during lockdown.

For the duration of the online drawing activity, 17 participants became inactive in the second week, and soon after, another 11 participants withdrew from the WhatsApp group. Phone calls were made to the participants who were not active on WhatsApp/Facebook. Nine participants completed and participated in the online creative drawing workshop. Despite our



efforts to encourage their participation and remind them of the intent behind using their data, several challenges were experienced. These include a high dropout rate at the inception of the workshop, personal constraints, network issues, data misuse, and a lack of necessary materials, leading to inactive engagement. They were constantly urged to post their completed work on the WhatsApp group.

The research process and results were documented, and this documentation was used as research material, which provided valuable insights into the use of social media in research under difficult circumstances. Journaling is a well-accepted method used by many researchers. Reflective journaling provided key insights that were difficult to document otherwise. Reflective journaling also enabled to capture learning insights by documenting observations and responses to constraints, inactive engagement, and technical challenges.

Phone calls and private conversations were necessary to determine reasons for non-participation. Assessment during the online creative activity was vital to gauge whether youth had a smartphone or if any member of their family owned a smartphone for use to take photographs and document their work.

Online reflective journaling and the application of a co-participatory approach were deeply grounded and fundamental to the research process. The CARER envisioned that journaling as a process for collecting ideas was critical at this stage, as it helped youth discover their ideas and personal voice. The evidence was documented and compiled for data analysis and presented in the (a-r-t) research process.

Facilitation for online platforms, incorporating sustainable creative activities, as well as face-to-face facilitation, spanning from June to November 2020, was prepared (Appendix B). Under the Level 2 COVID-19 restrictions, where travel was allowed, and 10 people could meet from October to November 2021, it became feasible to facilitate face-to-face creative workshops. Face-to-face workshops were proactively categorised, with plans to facilitate additional sessions in 2022 involving the two facilitators who engaged with NEET youth for this first case.

Although discussions continued, the sustainable creative workshops never materialised. In December, one of the facilitators passed away from COVID-19, and the other facilitator's mother succumbed to the virus in December 2021. We no longer had access to other NGOs who could assist us, since building and maintaining a collaborative research relationship in community-based research is complex and requires sufficient time to establish.

The CARER's data collection process was at risk. Nonetheless, a community group was suggested at the beginning of 2022 in another setting that became the second case. This was an exciting opportunity for the CARER to engage in face-to-face creative workshops for

additional data collection. We decided to use the first case on its own as an example of data collection in an online environment, and the second case for the face-to-face workshops.

### 5.3 Instruments and processes – NEET data

**Table 5-1: Data instruments, process, and analysis**

| <b>Data collection instruments</b>                                                  | <b>Date collection process</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Analysis</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reflection journal                                                                  | New insights during group engagement were gained to guide future analyses. Reflection served both as a teaching tool and a valid research methodology. Participants kept reflection journals during the online creative drawing research process, thereby enhanced conversations between them and the CARER. These journals helped NEET youth to document their lived experience during the pandemic. | Reflection journaling was not an easy task for NEET youth during the online creative drawing exercises, as they faced multiple changes arising from the pandemic. Some participants found comfort in selecting images portraying messages of hope.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Questionnaires                                                                      | Carefully considered questionnaires were used to gather data that effectively addressed research questions and ensured a reasonable response rate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Questionnaires provided insightful information about participation in the online creative drawing workshop. All participants felt sourcing drawing material was challenging but they enjoyed being creative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Co-participatory online workshops using creative processes to explore conversations | The online creative workshop started with a substantial number of participants but ended with a small group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Co-participatory workshops using creative processes to explore conversations were helpful in understanding participants well-being during the pandemic. Many participants described being creative created a calming space during the pandemic's affects. In hindsight co-participating with a small group enabled the CARER to obtain sufficient data from participants.                                                                                                        |
| Participation observation                                                           | Participant observation involves the study of cultures. During the pandemic, observations were made by collating different responses and then shared with the groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Observing the cultural aspects of NEET youth in the community was important for transforming NEET youths' mindsets about their socio- economic circumstances. They were encouraged to believe in themselves and become proactive citizens in the country. Participants expressed future hope while participating in the online creative drawing workshop they for the future. However, we realised that this was insignificant in terms of the negative effects of the pandemic. |

## 5.4 NEET case thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as the most appropriate qualitative approach. This analysis enabled categorisation, theme development, clarification of detailed data, and interpretation across various themes. The themes were broadly and concisely linked to raw data as a summary for analysis using participants' answers to the questions in the online feedback drawing forms. This required a comparison of the relative frequencies of key concepts, with a focus on theme co-occurrence and inter-theme relationships.

Five questions were posted to NEET youth. Their responses were combined for each question to explore the data.

**Table 5-2: Online questions and combined participant feedback**

| Questions                                                                    | Combined answers from the participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Q1: Please share your experience from participating in research on WhatsApp? | The participants indicated that their participation was hampered by insufficient data and/or network connectivity. Many indicated that when they made things or interacted creatively, they felt good. They enjoyed the research and liked working in an online group that motivate each other.                                                                                                                        |
| Q2: How did you experience drawing activities and finding drawing material?  | Participants enjoyed drawing as something new. Some expressed that they felt good while doing the creative activities and in doing so found themselves. A few noted that it was difficult to find drawing materials in their immediate area.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Q3: How did you find doing reflection journal?                               | All participants found keeping a reflection journal challenging.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Q4: How would you feel about a face-to-face workshop?                        | Surprisingly, all participants indicated that they would rather have face-to-face workshops, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic regulations. During this time no face-to-face teaching and facilitation of workshops were allowed. They found the online creative activity valuable; however, some asked to be invited to participate the following year because it is good for them to do these activities. |
| Q5: Anything you would like to suggest helping us involve youth?             | The youth suggested that they need help in their community. More projects, activities and workshops should be facilitated. They believed they could bring change to themselves and their areas. Certain participants felt better about themselves and thanked us for the opportunity.                                                                                                                                  |

The data from this questionnaire were coded, and an excerpt is presented in the next table.

**Table 5-3: An excerpt of the questionnaire data**

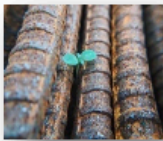
| Key concept              | Question                                                                    | Theme            | Sub Theme              | Responses                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Participant specific responses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participation experience | Q1 Please share your experience from participating in research on WhatsApp? | Challenges       | Technology             | The participants indicated that their participation was hampered because of insufficient data and or network connectivity.                                                                                         | "I still don't have data am only using WhatsApp data and I really want to participate" [P10] "I withdraw Bcz u no longer providing us with data to participate" [P53]                                                                                                                 |
| Lived Experience         | Q1 Please share your experience from participating in research on WhatsApp? | Lived experience | Sense of self          | Many indicated that when they make things or interacted creatively, they felt good.                                                                                                                                | "Participating on the research made me feel important as I was able to share my opinions. Hearing and seeing what others felt about the pandemic, made me realize that we're all affected equally but in                                                                              |
| Participation experience | Q1 Please share your experience from participating in research on WhatsApp? | Lived experience | Sense of group         | They enjoyed the research and liked working in an online group to motivate each other.                                                                                                                             | "The research was so great, like it's taking care of our community and keeping the youth busy. It also give knowledge to appreciate small things like to make use of recycling" [P13]                                                                                                 |
| Drawing experience       | Q2 How did you experience drawing activities and finding drawing material?  | Method           | Draw                   | Participants enjoyed drawing to experience something new.                                                                                                                                                          | "It was a little bit challenging" [P28].                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Drawing experience       | Q2 How did you experience drawing activities and finding drawing material?  | Creativity       | Being creative         | Some expressed that they felt good while doing the creative activities and in doing so found themselves.                                                                                                           | "This activity made me realize that we can't do certain things until we try them. I always thought I couldn't draw but well I drew a pretty great                                                                                                                                     |
| Drawing experience       | Q2 How did you experience drawing activities and finding drawing material?  | Method           | Draw                   | A few articulated that it was difficult finding drawing materials in their immediate area.                                                                                                                         | "Very challenging and making me see my strength and weaknesses" [P31]                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Reflections              | Q3 How did you find doing reflection journal?                               | Reflections      | Participant reflection | All participants found doing the reflection journal challenging.                                                                                                                                                   | "As a person we occasionally reflect on our lives. As such we miss something about ourselves. The reflection journal made me see a lot about myself, as I reflected on my life" [P36]. "I will be very happy as I can talk out my dream and maybe my doors will be open" [P31]. "That |
| Workshop mode            | Q4 How would you feel about face-to-face workshop?                          | Participation    | Mode                   | Surprisingly all participants indicated that they would rather have face-to-face workshops especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic regulations. During this time no face-to-face teaching and facilitation of | "I'm not a social media person, therefore a face to face would be the great for me" [P36]                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Workshop mode            | Q4 How would you feel about face-to-face                                    | Creativity       | Being creative         | They found the self-expression activity to be great                                                                                                                                                                | It would be good, because you can learn a lot from it. And will help me                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

### Quotations verbatim from NEET youth

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Participant 10.</b></p> <p>I still don't have data am only using WhatsApp data and I really want to participate</p>                                                                                                                                                                         | <p><b>Participant 13</b></p> <p>The research was so great, like it's taking care of our community and keeping the youth busy. It also give knowledge to appreciate small things like to make use of recycling.</p> |
| <p><b>Participant 36.</b></p> <p>Participating on the research made me feel important as I was able to share my opinions. Hearing and seeing what others felt about the pandemic, made me realize that we we're all affected equally but in different ways.</p>                                   | <p><b>Participant 53</b></p> <p>I withdraw Bcz u no longer providing us with datas to participate</p>                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Participant 28</b></p> <p>It was a little bit challenging</p> <p><b>Participant 36</b></p> <p>This activity made me realize that we sometimes think we can't do certain things until we try them. I always thought I couldn't draw but well I drew a pretty great impression of myself.</p> | <p><b>Participant 31</b></p> <p>Very challenging and making me see my Strength and weaknesses</p>                                                                                                                  |

**Figure 5-4: Examples of WhatsApp chats**

Table 5-4: An excerpt of the summary of WhatsApp responses

| Themes                        | Combined comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Visuals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hope for the future           | A collective hope for a better future was reflected, <del>symbolised</del> through images of faith, freedom, and hope. They were positive that challenges like the pandemic, societal inequality, and their personal struggles would surpass. They expressed their desire for a better future, especially for healthcare workers, communities, and youth during COVID | <p><b>Participant 5</b></p> <p>A picture that represents hope to all healthcare workers out there, that one day it will all be over . . . Dying of patients, the pressure that they are feeling right now, the stress of leaving their families to save people <del>from</del> <u>this</u> pandemic will all be over . .</p> <p><b>Participant 44</b></p> <p>Evening <del>Sipho</del>, we're very interested in your topic. Do we have the next surveys already? I'd like to start on <u>them</u> too. A smile on my <del>son's</del> face brings about hope in my life. my culture this is symbolic with medication and healing (A picture that represents Hope)</p> <p><b>Participant 9</b></p> <p>It doesn't matter how many times you've broke down. It's about how you stand up and move forward (picture that represent hope)</p> |  <p>P5</p>  <p>P44</p>  <p>P9</p> |
| Struggles during the pandemic | Participants highlighted the broader community impact of COVID-19. Fear, economic decline, and future uncertainty amid social inequalities was <del>emphasised</del> .                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p><b>Participant 35</b> Buried and forgot but we prevail. We "the impoverished" are held prison by the pandemic. <b>Participant 9</b> Pray for the new coronavirus to stop spreading, for people who are infected with covid19 or facing quarantine, for leaders responsible for making decision about the new coronavirus and for families adjusting to new ways of life (picture that represent covid19)</p> <p><b>Participant 52</b> I personally leading the youth in local</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                   |

The WhatsApp text responses were coded to derive themes, and an excerpt appears in the following table.

**Table 5-5: Excerpt of WhatsApp themes and sub-themes**

| Theme            | Sub theme          | Theme codes                                   | Combined comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lived experience | Sense of future    | Hope for the future                           | A collective hope for a better future was reflected, symbolised through images of faith, freedom, and hope. They were positive that challenges like the pandemic, societal inequality, and their personal struggles would surpass. They expressed their desire for a better future, especially for healthcare workers, communities, and youth during COVID | <b>Participant 5</b> A picture that represents hope to all healthcare workers out there, that one day it will all be over . . . Dying of patients, the pressure that they are feeling right now, the stress of leaving their families to save people from this pandemic will all be over . <b>Participant 44</b> Evening Siphelo, we're very interested in your topic. Do we have the next surveys already? I'd like to start on them too.<br>A smile on my Son's face brings about hope in my life. my culture this is symbolic with medication and healing (A picture that represents Hope) <b>Participant 9</b> It doesn't matter how many times you've broke down. It's about how you stand up and move forward (picture that represent hope)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Challenges       | Global challenges  | Struggles during the pandemic                 | Participants highlighted the broader community impact of COVID-19. Fear, economic decline, and future uncertainty amid social inequalities was emphasised,                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Participant 35</b> Buried and forgot but we prevail. We "the impoverished" are held prison by the pandemic. <b>Participant 9</b> Pray for the new coronavirus to stop spreading, for people who are infected with covid19 or facing quarantine, for leaders responsible for making decision about the new coronavirus and for families adjusting to new ways of life (picture that represent covid19).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Lived experience | Sense of community | Struggles during the pandemic                 | Participants highlighted the broader community impact of COVID-19. Fear, economic decline, and future uncertainty amid social inequalities was emphasised,                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Participant 52</b> I personally leading the youth in local area film productions, whose idea came into existence in 2011 9 years in the game. My aim is to empowering and open an opportunities for them to rise and shine' our most unfortunate part we have no copyright in each and every project we record on the other hand the schools that we were working with to generate income are currently under strictly lockdown regulations and our youth is doing nothing .we have no open space where we can work to keep ourselves busy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Space            | Safe               | Woman's safety                                | A strong desire for environments where women can feel safe, free from fear of rape or abduction, was concerning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Participant 5.</b> A picture that represents an environment where women feel free around men, an environment where women can be around men without any fear of being raped or abducted by men                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Lived experience | Being resilient    | Youth resilience, perseverance and leadership | Participants emphasised resilience, perseverance, and the importance of inner strength in overcoming challenges. Concerns included youth unemployment, drugs, crime, and the need for strong leadership. They prayed for healthcare workers and for the end of COVID-19 were also highlighted                                                              | <b>Participant 30.</b> I'm thankful for this opportunity u give us than k you. Afternoon everyone I am really wearied about future of this country. I believe that CPUT will not only do research, will stand up and come down to basics 10 from the country will be down and I do no, example how Cape Town is full of sharks, if we do one move, country will be save and only that people can <b>Participant 38.</b> Economic declination will always be a problem in this country under the current state we are living in; the state where there is no accountability of crime committed more especially from those powerful people in a political class thus we are still finding a huge inequality in our country that causes some cities to be congested which professionals classified such as Pull and push factors. This guy I can attest for him by us we are still going far remain still never be a shaken man. A brief experience of my drawing skill of any type. |



Below is an excerpt of the data specific to the data collection instruments.

**Table 5-6: Method reflections**

| Theme         | Sub theme      | Data collection instruments                                                         | Data collection process                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Data collection reflections                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participation | Outcome        | Reflection journal                                                                  | It unearthed new knowledge during group engagement and guided future analyses. Reflection served both as a teaching tool and a valid research methodology. Participants kept reflection journals during the online creative drawing research process, which enhanced conversation between them and the ART. These journals helped NEET youth to document their lived experience during the pandemic. | Reflection journaling was not an easy task for NEET youth during the online creative drawing exercises. Some participants felt comfort in selecting images portraying messages of hope.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Participation | Participant    | Questionnaires                                                                      | Suitable considered questionnaires were used to gather valuable data that effectively addressed research questions and ensured a reasonable response rate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Questionnaires provided insightful information about their participation in the online drawing creative workshop. All participants felt resourcing drawing material challenging but enjoyed being creative                                                                                                                                                               |
| Creativity    | Being creative | Co-participatory online workshops using creative processes to explore conversations | The online creative workshop started with a substantial number of participants but ended with a small group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Co-participatory workshops using creative processes to explore conversations was helpful to understand participants well-being during the pandemic. Many participants described being creative created a calming space during the looming pandemic affects. In hindsight co-participating with a small group enabled the ART to obtain efficient data from participants. |

These three datasets were combined in the code book to derive the sub-themes and themes. Six themes were derived from the fifty-five sub-themes.

**Table 5-7: Themes and sub-themes**

| Theme                      | Sub-theme              | Sub-theme count |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1. Lived experience</b> |                        | <b>18</b>       |
|                            | Being resilient        | 3               |
|                            | Sense of community     | 5               |
|                            | Sense of future        | 4               |
|                            | Sense of group         | 1               |
|                            | Sense of self          | 5               |
| <b>2. Space</b>            |                        | <b>1</b>        |
|                            | Safe                   | 1               |
| <b>3. Reflections</b>      |                        | <b>2</b>        |
|                            | ART reflections        | 1               |
|                            | Participant reflection | 1               |
| <b>4. Creativity</b>       |                        | <b>6</b>        |
|                            | Being creative         | 4               |
|                            | Creative process       | 2               |
| <b>5. Participation</b>    |                        | <b>16</b>       |
|                            | Ethics                 | 3               |
|                            | Mode                   | 4               |
|                            | Outcome                | 3               |
|                            | Participant            | 2               |
|                            | Draw                   | 3               |
|                            | Teach                  | 1               |
| <b>6. Challenges</b>       |                        | <b>15</b>       |
|                            | Contextual challenges  | 4               |
|                            | Global challenges      | 4               |
|                            | Life challenges        | 1               |
|                            | Technology             | 6               |
| <b>Total Count</b>         |                        | <b>55</b>       |

The analysis of each theme with its associated sub-themes is discussed next.

#### **5.4.1 Lived experience (Theme 1)**

Participants emphasised resilience, perseverance, and the importance of inner strength in overcoming challenges. Concerns included: youth unemployment, drugs, crime, and the need for strong leadership. Prayers for healthcare workers and calls for the end to COVID-19 were also highlighted. *“I’m thankful for this opportunity u give us, thank you” [P30]. “Economic*



*declination [sic] will always be a problem in this country under the current state we are living in; the state where there is no accountability of crime committed more especially from those powerful people in a political class thus we are still finding a huge inequality in our country that causes some cities to be congested which professionals classified such as pull and push factors” [P38].*

**Artistic expression and self-belief:** Participants expressed struggles with creativity but emphasised resilience and the importance of self-belief in overcoming challenges. *“As young man who have being challenging wanting to do something for Africa, as that is my dream, I will tell you that to bring change need for u to believe and trust yourself and expect yes and no. I am telling u as youth we must stop expect yes because that is one of the reasons the country is like this, if I can tell you about me u will not believe me that I am coming from that difficulties” [P30].*

Faith, prayers, and cultural symbols of healing and hope reflected a strong need for spiritual and emotional support. *“Pray for the new coronavirus to stop spreading, for people who are infected with covid19 or facing quarantine, for leaders responsible for making decisions about the new coronavirus, and for families adjusting to new ways of life” [P9].*

**Sense of community:** The youth suggested that they need help in their community. More projects, activities, and workshops should be facilitated. *“Like you guys to get some activities to get youth busy and to create awareness on alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy” [P39].*

They believed they could bring change to themselves and their areas. *“It’s a good thing to always bring the project in our community to keep the youth busy. It would be great to also teach the youth skills like how to create your own money (financial advisor). Starting slowly from small things and what we have around the community that would add to in creating job opportunities” [P13]. “Come down to rural areas and help youth, as there’s talent but no one to help them, rural areas’ development is the only way to build a better country. MAY MY FEEDBACK MAKE A CHANGE! THANK YOU” [P31].*

Participants highlighted the broader community impact of COVID-19. Fear, economic decline, and future uncertainty amid social inequalities were emphasised.

**Cultural significance and healing:** *“I personally leading the youth in local area film productions, whose idea came into existence in 2011 nine years in the game. My aim is to empowering and open an opportunities for them to rise and shine’ our most unfortunate part we have no copyright in each and every project we record on the other hand the schools that we were working with to generate income are currently under strictly lockdown regulations and our youth is doing nothing. We have no open space where we can work to keep ourselves busy [P52].*

The participants connected hope and healing to cultural symbols and traditions, reflecting a desire for spiritual and emotional well-being.

**Sense of self:** Many reported that when they made things or interacted creatively, they felt good. *“Participating on [sic] the research made me feel important as I was able to share my opinions. Hearing and seeing what others felt about the pandemic made me realise that we’re all affected equally but in different ways” [P36].* Certain participants felt better about themselves and thanked us for giving them this opportunity.

During the pandemic, observations were made by collating different responses and then shared with the groups. Observing the NEET youth in the community was important to transform NEET mindsets about their socio-economic circumstances. To believe in themselves and become proactive citizens in the country. Participants felt a future hope while participating in the online creative drawing workshop. Virtual participation observation was employed by the CARER.

**Sense of future:** A collective hope for a better future was reflected, symbolised through images of faith, freedom, and hope. They were positive that challenges like the pandemic, societal inequality, and their personal struggles would pass. They expressed their desire for a better future, especially for healthcare workers, communities, and youth during COVID. *“A picture that represents hope to all healthcare workers out there, that one day it will all be over . . . Dying of patients, the pressure that they are feeling right now, the stress of leaving their families to save people from this pandemic will all be over [P44].*

*“Evening, we’re very interested in your topic. Do we have the next surveys already? I’d like to start on them too. A smile on my Son’s face brings about hope in my life. My culture this is symbolic with medication and healing. It doesn’t matter how many times you’ve broke down. It’s about how you stand up and move forward” [P9].* Participants highlighted the importance of community efforts, responsible leadership, and youth empowerment, particularly in rural areas.

Participant 30 felt that youth need to change their mindsets and stop expecting things, but work hard and use their creative abilities to make a change. *“As young man who have being challenging wanting to do something for Africa, as that is my dream, I will tell you that to bring change need for u to believe and trust yourself and expect yes and no. I am telling u as youth we must stop expect yes because that is one of the reasons the country is like this, if I can tell you about me u will not believe me that I am coming from that difficulties. Tell me if all of us looking to be hired are we going to get jobs all of us, the answer is no. That’s the case to us youth, we must change the mindset. That is one of the reasons the crime is high like this, no believe and creative abilities for the good thing” [P30].*

**Sense of group:** They enjoyed the research and liked working in an online group to motivate each other. *“The research was so great, like it’s taking care of our community and keeping the youth busy. It also gives knowledge to appreciate small things, like making use of recycling” [P13].*

**Sense of the future:** Participants highlighted their involvement in creative endeavours like art to empower themselves and others. They also stressed the need for youth empowerment to combat unemployment, crime, and drug abuse. *“Tell me if all of us looking to be hired are we going to get jobs all of us, the answer is no. That’s the case to us youth, we must change the mindset. That is one of the reasons the crime is high like this, no believe and creative abilities for the good things” [P30].*

Based on the above, the lived experience finding of the NEET youth is that every aspect of their lives is influenced by the socio-economic challenges experienced by their community, which was aggravated by the pandemic experienced on all levels from the individual to the community. However, even though they indicated some ideas about a better future, they remained pessimistic about any real change.

#### **5.4.2 Space (Theme 2)**

A strong desire for environments where women can feel safe, free from fear of rape or abduction, was expressed. This was represented by the picture posted by [P5]. They experienced their environment as unsafe, with concerns about crime, inequality, unemployment, and political accountability raised. They expressed frustration with the absence of engagement on social issues and economic opportunities, especially for youth, during the worsening economic decline and corruption. *“Economic declination will always be a problem in this country under this current state we are living in; the state where there is no accountability of crime committed more especially from those powerful people in a political class thus we are still finding a huge inequality in our country that causes some cities to be congested which professionals classified such as Pull and push factors” [P12].*

The NEET youth indicated that drawing in a virtual space was challenging. *“It was a little bit challenging” [P28].* A few articulated that it was difficult to find drawing materials in their immediate area. *“Very challenging and making me see my strength and weaknesses” [P31].* Although they struggled with drawing, they were willing to try.

The finding for the space theme was that the NEET youth felt unsafe in their environment, which had become part of their everyday living. Teaching creative skills was hampered by their lack of drawing skills, a challenge amplified in virtual space.

### 5.4.3 Reflections (Theme 3)

The online creative workshop started with a substantial number of participants but ended with a small group. Co-participatory workshops using creative processes to explore conversations were helpful to understand participants' well-being during the pandemic. Many participants described being creative as providing a calming space during the effects of the pandemic. In hindsight, co-participating with a small group enabled the CARER to obtain sufficient data from participants.

Even though a few participants used their reflection journals, most participants found keeping a reflection journal challenging. *"As a person we occasionally reflect on our lives. As such we miss something about ourselves. The reflection journal made me see a lot about myself, as I reflected on my life" [P36]. "I will be very happy as I can talk out my dream and maybe my doors will be open" [P31]. "That was the hardest part for me" [P51].*

Reflective journaling was less successful on the WhatsApp platform. From my teaching experience, journaling to capture reflective learning experiences is not easy, even for tertiary education students. Although NEET participants found journaling challenging, their visual reflections offered an alternative means of expressing thoughts and emotions. Their images were documented to capture data on their situational responses, which reflected their experiences and were analysed.

Reflection unearthed new knowledge during group engagement and guided future analyses. Reflection served both as a teaching tool and a valid research method. Participants kept reflection journals during the online creative drawing research process, thereby enhanced conversation between them and the CARER, who anticipated that reflection journals could help NEET youth document their lived experiences during the pandemic. Reflection journaling was not an easy task for NEET youth during the online creative drawing exercises. Some participants found comfort in selecting images portraying messages of hope.

The value of self-reflection for the youth group allowed them to learn more about themselves, even though reflecting was initially difficult for them. Online reflection made it even more difficult, as they had to consider multiple new ways of engaging.

### 5.4.4 Creativity (Theme 4)

Within my CARER roles, my cognitive experiences were marked by salient thoughts and feelings, sparked by creative inspiration that drove my innovative approaches. Sustainably teaching participants creative skills meant more than showing them how to make art; it was about nurturing a deeper understanding of how creativity can be developed, cultivating awareness around environmental responsibility. The participants were taught to explore their artistic potential using materials found in their surroundings. *"This activity made me realise*

*that we can't do certain things until we try them. I always thought I couldn't draw but well I drew a pretty great impression of myself" [P36].*

The aim was for them to learn to think critically about the resources they were taught to use and the creative messages the artworks conveyed. Through this process, creativity could become a tool for artistic expression, empowering vulnerable individuals to nurture their creative skills for potential opportunities and hope.

Based on the above, the finding was that teaching the youth creative processes to stimulate creativity did not provide sufficient evidence of achieved creativity or of understanding sustainability as a concept. However, interest was created in its potential for a possible future.

#### **5.4.5 Participation (Theme 6)**

Several challenges negatively affected participation, such as limited connectivity, data costs associated with managing posts on selected social media platforms, and the need to control access, which risked participant anonymity.

The impact of COVID-19 on the participants was widespread, as they experienced stress, isolation, and uncertainty. COVID-19 adversely affected social activities and individuals' mental health. NEET youth shared that the absence of in-person engagement was frustrating, and they believed their drawings could have improved with assistance. The participants explained that these creative practices provided comfort and strength during difficult times.

All participants indicated that they would rather have face-to-face workshops, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic regulations. During that time, no face-to-face teaching or facilitation of workshops was allowed. *"I'm not a social media person, therefore a face to face would be great for me" [P36].*

*"It was obviously difficult to make it as everyone can see it's not perfection, I am not good at drawing skill of any type. I enjoyed this exercise hence I was forcing myself on something I know I am not good at which I was willing to make it possible. On the side of understanding the exercise I think maybe I still need a brief about what objective it aims to achieve, I won't lie. I used a Black coloured Pencil." [P12].* Teaching the youth participants, for example, how to draw regardless of prior experiences with drawing seemed possible, and it was humbling to see their efforts. All the participants felt that sourcing drawing material was challenging, but they still enjoyed being creative.

Non-participation required follow-up through private conversations to understand and address barriers to engagement. Participants needed consistent encouragement to post completed work and use data vouchers exclusively for the research activities. Despite these efforts, the

dropout rate was significant, and it was not clear whether the youth found participating, without a clear benefit, pointless amid pandemic-related hopelessness.

The use of an online environment posed ethical challenges. However, sufficient literature supports the implementation of positive ethical practices during the pandemic. Clear rules were established before commencing the online creative activity, and all data collected were securely stored to protect participants' privacy.

The finding based on the above was that participation was difficult because of the reliance on technology, which did not allow for demonstrating new skills in a space where the teacher was able to immediately determine the successful application of the taught skills. However, the youth did enjoy the drawing activity and were surprised by their ability to draw. Many were not able to continue with the activities because they did not have the data to participate.

#### **5.4.6 Challenges (Theme 7)**

The use of online technology offered several advantages, including the ability to record and transcribe audio. Additionally, posts were automatically stored, facilitating efficient data management. However, a downside was the lack of immediate human-to-human interactions and the ability to teach creative skills that are better suited to face-to-face teaching.

Technology-related challenges resulted in participation difficulties due to data and network issues and broken handsets, as well as resource constraints issues in accessing necessary materials in the participants' immediate area; compliance with COVID-19 restrictions also presented challenges. Examples of technological challenges are *"I still don't have data am only using WhatsApp data, and I really want to participate."* [P10]. *"I withdraw Bcz u no longer providing us with data to participate"* [P53].

The challenge was also to moderate posts on chosen social media platforms to remove inappropriate posts. Posts were already stored in digital form within the Facebook/ WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp does not support anonymous posts presenting an ethical challenge, and posts had to be anonymised. Clear rules were established before commencing the online creative activity, and all data collected were securely stored to protect participants' privacy.

Most of the challenges for this case relate to influences typical of a compromised context. *"Concerns about crime, inequality, unemployment, and political accountability were raised."* [P30]. At the same time, uncertainty and fear of the pandemic affected the entire world, resulting in widespread disruption. This also means that alternative methods to what was planned were needed to continue with the research. *"Buried and forgot but we prevail. We 'the impoverished' are held prison by the pandemic"* [P35].

The emotional states of the participants needed to be considered in acknowledging their experience of life during a pandemic. Even the technology challenges stemmed from the contextual challenges.

Based on the above, the finding for the challenge theme is that most of the challenges experienced were the result of the pandemic, which aggravated socio-economic challenges typical of an already compromised context. However, technology-enabled participation, even though limited, was immediately adopted by adapting teaching practices without any prior warning for proper preparation. This may still lay the foundation for increased and better use of online learning in the future.

#### 5.4.7 Summary of findings and analysis

My findings were derived from collected data and interpreted to establish meaning. These findings provided the necessary insights to answer the research questions.

The introductory drawing activities using sustainable materials inspired by seeds were implemented, replicating a pilot activity with friends and family.

**Table 5-8: Summary of the Case 1 findings**

|   | Theme            | Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Lived experience | The lived experience finding of the NEET youth is that every aspect of their lives was influenced by the socio-economic challenges experienced by their community, which were aggravated by the pandemic at all levels, from the individual to the community. However, even though they indicated some ideas about a better future, they remained pessimistic about any real change.                                                            |
| 2 | Space            | The NEET youth felt unsafe in their environment, which had become part of their everyday living. The teaching of creative skills was hampered by their lack of drawing skills, which were even more difficult in a virtual space.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3 | Reflections      | Due to circumstances related to the pandemic, it was impossible to explore the transition into becoming an artist/researcher/teacher beyond teaching drawing skills. The transition required adapting to online teaching of drawing skills as opposed to face-to-face teaching. The CARER also had to reconsider the research aspects in a virtual space to adapt to online arts skills teaching.                                               |
| 4 | Creativity       | Teaching the youth creative processes to stimulate their creativity did not provide sufficient evidence of achieved creativity or understanding sustainability as a concept. However, interest was created in its potential for a possible future.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 5 | Participation    | Participation was difficult because of the reliance on technology, which did not allow for demonstrating new skills in a space where the teacher was able to immediately determine the successful application of the taught skills. However, the youth did enjoy the drawing activity and were surprised by their ability to draw. Many were not able to continue with the activities because they did not have sufficient data to participate. |
| 6 | Challenges       | Most of the challenges experienced were a result of the pandemic, which aggravated socio-economic challenges typical of an already compromised context. However, technology-enabled participation, even though limited, was immediately adopted by adapting teaching practices without any prior                                                                                                                                                |

|  | Theme | Finding                                                                                                                            |
|--|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |       | warning for proper preparation. This could still lay the foundation for increased and better use of online learning in the future. |

#### **5.4.8 Reflection: valuable Insights through creative co-participation**

Introductory creative co-participatory sustainable drawing processes provided insights into sustainable creative skills development for reflecting on and transforming underserved contexts. These processes aligned with the CARER's aims for the study.

The methodologies employed for the study helped address the research problem effectively. The use of online platforms during COVID-19 was practical and insightful. However, it presented many challenges when dealing with individuals in stressful situations, especially NEET youth in underserved contexts.

Future face-to-face workshops planned during reduced COVID-19 restrictions were unfortunately halted before the implementation of sustainable creative activities due to the facilitators' losses. Following setbacks in 2021, a community group at a rehabilitation Centre provided an opportunity for a face-to-face workshop in early 2022, aiding additional data collection.

Overall, the research demonstrated the potential of sustainable creative workshops to inspire hope and equip participants with new skills, and to alter catalyse in underserved contexts. However, this requires further research, as the findings of the first case are based on limited data and are insufficient to indicative teaching of creative processes in an online environment or through the use of social media. Although the pandemic significantly influenced research, the insights gained can still be used as input for future studies.

### **5.5 CASE 2: Data collection**

#### **5.5.1 Substance users – compromised context case**

The target group for the second case comprised substance users in a compromised context. The phenomenon being investigated in this case was drug addiction. Through participatory creative process methods, the substance abusers continuously reflected through body mapping on their actions and experiences, and this reflected process enabled the participants to express their experiences.

#### **5.5.2 Contextual understanding**

Substance abusers in compromised contexts face complex challenges, including poverty, limited access to healthcare, and social stigma. We adopted the concept of compromised context as one that includes areas of relative advantage alongside settings where lives are affected by social ills associated with poverty, contributing to feelings of being unsafe. The



setting of the second case was an underserved community within a larger rural town similar to the context of the first case. The factors associated with poverty contribute to a cycle of dependency and marginalisation. Individuals struggle with addiction while not having the resources and support needed for recovery. The environment often intensifies their vulnerabilities, making it difficult to break free from substance abuse, with negative consequences.

### **5.5.3 Participant recruitment**

The study involved six purposively selected male participants aged 20–50, in partnership with a rehabilitation centre, adhering to the centre's guidelines. The rehabilitation centre does not allow women and men to socialise, hence the reason for male participants only.

The rehabilitation service is in-house; identified persons commit to a five-week stay to attend the rehabilitation programme, during which time they are not permitted to leave the premises at all. The centre, an NPO, receives some subsidy from the government and serves persons who are unable to afford private rehabilitation. The data collection had to be planned at the same time as the rehabilitation programme. The centre incorporated the data collection activities into their rehabilitation schedule.

Five participants completed the workshops; the sixth participant completed many exercises but withdrew from the rehabilitation programme. Data from the questionnaires revealed that all participants were unemployed. The CARER needed to develop participants' capabilities and consider their well-being by employing creative approaches.

### **5.5.4 Entering the field**

Working with substance users in a compromised context using sustainable printmaking and body mapping was both enlightening and challenging.

### **5.5.5 Data collection**

Data collection involved three co-created components: (i) participants shared their lived experiences, which provided a deep contextual manifestation of their lives; (ii) life-sized body maps were artistically created united words, drawings and an interpretation key to decode various symbols; (iii) the detailed body map symbols explained the significance of each element incorporated. Additionally, insights were drawn from participant reflections, contributions from the facility's art facilitator, and observations by the CARER.

Methods of visual analysis were implemented to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences depicted on their life-sized body maps. Furthermore, employing sustainable printmaking techniques as a creative process amplified participants' voices and made their creative skills visible and real. The use and understanding of sustainable materials like paper, newspaper, printing ink, and printing equipment were a tangible experience. Body

mapping and sustainable printmaking practices employed as creative approaches externalise skills that may be hidden.

During the pandemic's hard lockdown, the future felt uncertain, and the CARER explored eco-dyeing techniques using plant matter from the yard on off-cut paper. An old metal pot, hot water, and rusted tin cans were used to create and document a library of examples. Although it started as a way to stay busy, this art practice later informed the facilitation work with the participants.



Figure 5-5: Eco-dyeing process



**Figure 5-6: A collage of eco-dyeing methods**



When the CARER commenced with the creative workshops, the CARER created a weekly timetable with time slots that aligned with the rehabilitation centre's timeframes. My intended approach was to facilitate sessions under typical lecturer-student conditions. Due to the strict regulations, I was ill-prepared and had to adjust my mindset to suit the rehabilitation's needs.

It was important to contextualise substance users' analysis in a rehabilitation centre to recognise the broader political context, from global to the South African and Western Cape governments, to work with community leaders and members to uphold rights and equality. In this way, it helped ensure that our creative interventions did not undermine vulnerable community structures in complex contexts.

#### *5.5.5.1 Registered nurse (rehabilitation centre art facilitator) reflections*

She suggested that participants should engage in all activities so they could be assessed and scored at the end of their three-month cycle, before they complete their rehabilitation. Her overall reflection on body mapping as a research tool for therapy and creativity correlated with my findings and the participants' thoughts. She commented that the workshop was facilitated well, despite the differences in substance-dependant individuals history and different backgrounds. She articulated that it is clear from the final presentation that the process and inclusion of creativity in therapy significantly influenced the individuals in the research group. Additionally, she suggested various improvements in parts of their lives during treatment. She plans to employ body mapping in her art facilitation at the centre.

#### *5.5.5.2 Body Mapping*

The body mapping data collection method proved valuable to gain insights into their lived worlds as they experienced them. The small number of participants made it possible to get to know them well. Each participant's experience is considered in the remainder of this subsection.

The facilitation of a three-day body mapping workshop for five weeks was completed, from Friday to Sunday. The participants attended their day-to-day activities during the week. The rehabilitation Centre's art facilitator was unavailable on Saturdays and Sundays but assisted on Fridays. The CARER was informed that supplementary services needed remuneration, which I learnt on arrival.

The CARER opted not to prepare a mock body map to prevent participants from copying creative elements from the mock body map and disregarding their imagination and creative abilities. Participants required sufficient information and guidance to fully immerse themselves in the process, allowing their lived experiences to reveal an element of surprise while engaging with the phenomena using creative approaches.

Trust was a major stumbling block at the beginning of the body mapping process. The nature of this creative process required (i) focusing on exploring their *felt sense* and reflecting on the creative skills they acquired to better equip themselves for the future, and (ii) substance-dependant individuals expressing their personal lived experiences of substance abuse creatively.

The participants were wary about revealing their personal information for publication. *David 1* feared that I would expose his personal information on social media. For this reason, he did not consent to any photographic documentation of himself during all the creative activities and the body map process. Disclosing or concealing personal information in their reflection journals or on their body maps is a participant's choice, and this was mitigated by continually reassuring participants that they were in a safe space. After the fourth day, *David 1* consented to photographic documentation.

Not all participants were exposed to creative exercises; some initially found drawing difficult. *Black Smeath* was observed to be disruptive but excited. His drawing ability was excellent. As activities progressed, he assisted struggling participants with my permission. *Mabra* was enthusiastic and confident. He mentioned that he had never drawn before.

Some of the questions related to their lived experiences, which they recorded in their reflection books, sparked emotions from most participants. *Changes Scott* was severely affected by these questions and could not reflect any answers in his reflection book. I needed to be flexible toward his needs, halt the exercise, and provide a break. A clinical psychologist was on standby, but participants felt it was unnecessary since they had regular one-on-one sessions with the clinical psychologist as part of their programme.

I mitigated the situation and suggested reflecting only on the positive aspects of their personal experiences. Reflection on personal experiences was necessary to contextualise a comprehensive description of their lives, while reflection on traumatising experiences was not the focus of this study. With their approval, they were willing to complete their positive reflections on their personal experiences after a short break.

The head of the centre informed me that this creative intervention was the first of its kind and requested permission to observe the body mapping process for all psychologists in one of the workshops. Psychologists confirmed that most alcohol abusers suffer from childhood trauma and shame. They were impressed by how body mapping can be a creative outlet for vulnerable participants to express their feelings, especially when they find it difficult to verbalise complex emotions. They considered that body mapping could be adopted as a healing tool in therapy to support people with a substance use disorder in improving their self-esteem and well-being. They saw how body mapping helped participants express deep-rooted emotions, which would

not necessarily emerge in therapy. To support individuals recovering from substance abuse, they endorsed the use of body mapping processes to boost self-esteem and healing in the future. Subsequently, employing the creative intervention (body mapping) in a compromised context appears promising for utilisation in this rehabilitation centre.

Careful observation was essential during body mapping facilitation to ensure time-consciousness and that sequential creative exercises were carefully observed and documented. Body mapping requires one to be flexible; however, the smooth flow of tasks was critical to ensure the completion of all activities to create a truthful life account of their body maps. Surprisingly, in the last sessions of the body map, participants *felt a sense* of immersion and chose to insert images of their addiction with words and symbols to indicate how their bodies were affected. Revealing their addiction was not a requirement for the body mapping process. This way, I gained insights into their habits and how they affected their lives and capabilities.

Running the workshops required careful planning and flexibility to ensure all exercises were completed chronologically on time and stayed true to individual narratives. Toward the end, some participants, without any persuasion, added images and symbols presenting their addictions. This gave deeper (a-r-t) -informed and participant insight into their lived experiences. Nevertheless, *Changes Scott* displayed considerable drawing skills with minimal guidance. This aligns with the ABR premise that creative practice can externalise tacit capability. The body mapping process, as an arts-based research method, allowed his creative ability to surface mysteriously without prior formal instruction. He was able to assist struggling participants.

*David 1's* lack of participation at the start of the workshop disadvantaged his progress. His confidence was low, and he struggled with the drawing activities. *David 2* was the eldest participant but was reserved and quiet. He could not draw or write and, as a result, displayed frustration. However, *David 2* was tenacious and enthusiastic. He needed continuous drawing guidance. His reading ability was excellent and he required much attention to write, which was affected over time due to substance abuse. *David 2's* confidence improved dramatically as the workshops continued, and he was able to express himself.

*Changes Scott* was very cautious and emotional. However, he was curious and willing to learn. *Changes Scott* exhibited low self-esteem because of his language barrier. Instructions were challenging for him to comprehend in English; however, he could grasp some Afrikaans advice. *Black Smeath* willingly explained all the guidelines in their mother tongue.

During his secondary school education *Changes Scott* was not taught printing techniques, yet he demonstrated a natural ability for printmaking. He was amazed by the printmaking skills he

gained using minimal tools and materials found in the surroundings to create beautiful and meaningful printed artwork. Participants gained confidence throughout the workshop and became more comfortable with their drawing style and printmaking techniques.

The CARER discovered a common thread in the phenomenon, as I used body mapping as an arts-based research method. Five themes were identified: engagement through body mapping to express their unique experiences, improvement of self-esteem, strengths, and hopes for the future through creative skills development; a sense of achievement and body mapping as an informative and healing tool.

#### *5.5.5.3 Creative process sessions: Cycle 1–5 photo evidence*

Creativity involves exploring original ideas and solving problems. It is a multi-layered process that includes thinking, feeling, doing, and the exploration of materials. In vulnerable communities, creative activities helped individuals managing stress, expressing emotions, and encouraging a sense of self. This supported healing, growth, and new perspectives. Creativity includes the ability to think differently, generate ideas, and adapt with flexibility.

Art-making is a vital component of human culture that allows vulnerable individuals to express themselves and connect with others. Sustainable printmaking helped the vulnerable to acquire a creative skill for future sustenance and supported cultural expression. Developing sustainable weaving preserved traditions, supported mental health, and strengthened communities and the environment. Through eco-friendly methods, sustainable bookbinding skills, improved literacy through picture books, and supported ethical and effective communication for sustainable development.

Introducing creative, sustainable printing processes allowed participants with a substance use disorder to be mindful of the environment and hands-on approach to art-making that supported both personal expression and community resilience. Through creative methods such as lino printing, collagraph printing, and weaving, they explored simple, low-impact techniques that encouraged innovation and storytelling. Integrating the body mapping process deepened engagement, allowing individuals to reflect on their lived experiences while developing valuable creative and practical skills. These practices fostered self-awareness, cultural expression, and sustainable thinking in a collaborative learning environment.

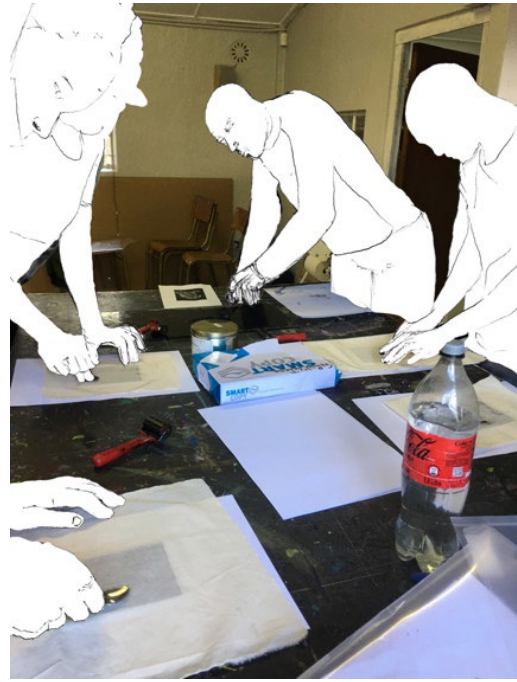


Figure 5-7: A collage of photographic evidence



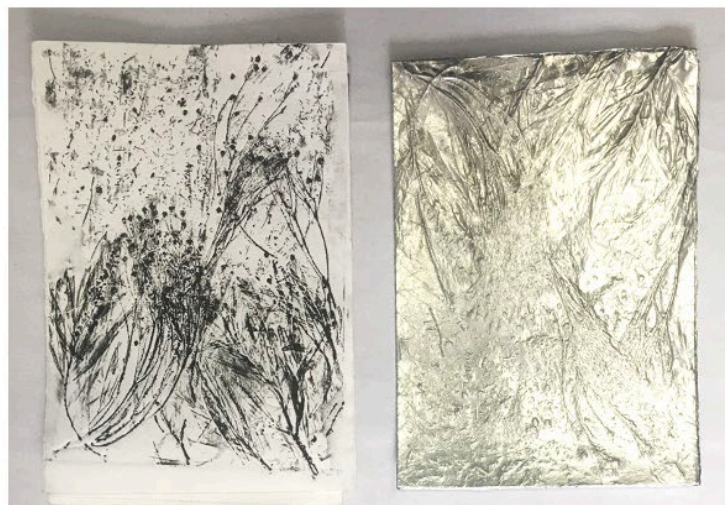
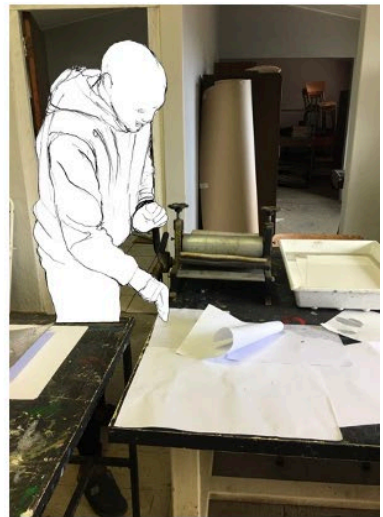
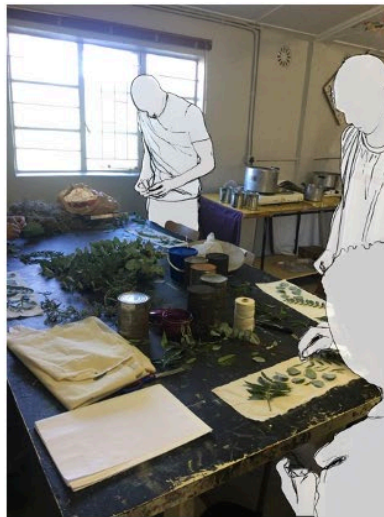
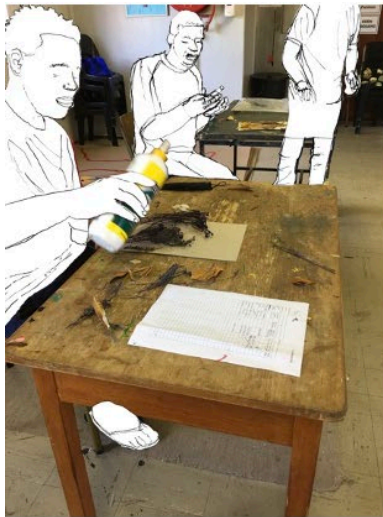


Figure 5-8: Cycle 2 Collagraph printing





Figure 5-9: Weaving cycle



Figure 5-10: Eco dyeing cycle



**Figure 5-11: Bookbinding cycle**

Punctuality was an essential aspect of the programme to ensure the smooth and timely facilitation of all the activities, through early communication issues affected it. The first creative process taught was lino print on paper and fabric. After carving the lino, the participants printed using a spoon to transfer the inked block. At the start of the process, one of the participants was unwilling to participate and provide consent. He then consented to participate at the beginning of the second creative printing process.

During the linoleum printing process, a scribe was needed to assist a participant who could read but not write, and to help the CARER maintain individual and group focus, which otherwise affected documentation. Tracing using the window was a good example of teaching the participants to use what is available when there is no equipment. Watching their learning in action was humbling, as they gained confidence in printing neat, perfect prints, as this is one of the guidelines for printmaking. Participants appreciated the possibilities of utilising linocut printing on different media, which sparked ideas for future use.

Participants engaged positively throughout the five-week cycle, except for one participant who was constantly sleepy, hampering his progress and the programme. Another participant suffered a severe eye infection and could not participate for one day; however, he caught up



with the activities. The body mapping process was considerably more challenging; participants were unsure about the process, and trust needed to be gained. Probing questions were asked during the body mapping process to understand their lived experiences, which sparked emotional outbursts around childhood memory questions—soft background music assisted with their relaxation and creativity.

**Table 5-9: Excerpt of creative processes and teacher reflections from the code book**

|                  |                 |         |                                                                                                                              |
|------------------|-----------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participation    | Ethics          | CPLino  | One participant was unwilling to participate and consent to any audio/ video / photographic media published on social media. |
| Participation    | Participant     | CPLino  | One participant could only write his name and surname. Scribing required.                                                    |
| Participation    | Participant     | CPLino  | Loose individual and group focus without an additional facilitator                                                           |
| Methods          | Teach           | CPLino  | Light bulb 1, tracing from a window                                                                                          |
| Participation    | Participant     | BM      | Positive participation                                                                                                       |
| Participation    | Ethics          | BM      | Assurance, to gain participants' trust for body mapping sessions                                                             |
| Challenges       | Institutional   |         | Punctuality                                                                                                                  |
| Creativity       | Being creative  | BM      | Soft background music for relaxation                                                                                         |
| Participation    | Participant     | BM      | No participation of sleepy participant hampered program.                                                                     |
| Challenges       | Institutional   | BM      | No participation of sleepy participant hampered program.                                                                     |
| Participation    | Participant     | BM      | Positive participation                                                                                                       |
| Challenges       | Life challenge  | BM      | Sparked emotions around childhood memory questions                                                                           |
| Participation    | Ethics          | BM      | Sparked emotions around childhood memory questions                                                                           |
| Participation    | Participant     | CPPrint | Willingness to get a perfect print                                                                                           |
| Participation    | Participant     | CPPrint | One participant with bad eye ache                                                                                            |
| Lived experience | Sense of future | CPPrint | Appreciating the possibilities of utilising lino printing on different mediums and bringing their ideas to the table         |
| Reflections      | ART reflection  | CPPrint | Documentation the need to remind myself not to forget                                                                        |

The rehabilitation presented many challenges during the body mapping workshops, which had stringent rules and regulations to adhere to. The elected class captain managed the group and assisted me with small tasks.

At the start and during the course of the workshops, I found it challenging to scribe all of *David 2's* verbal reflections in his reflection book. Consequently, this limited the CARER's full attention to the other participants, which adversely impacted the documentation of some of the activities. Without assistance, the CARER needed to set a mental reminder to document the creative tasks as they progressed.

The CARER was cautioned to provide only the sharp utensils needed for printmaking when scheduled. The materials for printmaking necessitate tools, knives, printing rollers, oil-based inks for linoleum printing, and thinners to clean all equipment. Under no circumstances was any equipment allowed in their living quarters. All sharp utensils were checked and collected after each printmaking session and were kept safe for the next day. Constantly being alert (policing) concurrently with facilitating all creative processes was challenging.

Even though vigilance was prioritised, a participant managed to take a cutting knife, which was later found in his pocket when he entered his quarters. The art facilitator notified me that an altercation occurred a few weeks before my arrival between this participant and another individual in another group. As a result, only five participants completed the body mapping workshop.

The experience was exhausting but rewarding. Participants' moods shifted negatively toward the completion of the body maps. They found managing their programme tasks, chores, and reflection homework challenging. *Black Smeath* was unwilling to continue, which sparked a negative attitude amongst the other participants. The nurse on duty and the CARER mitigated the situation and were able to continue with the activities after a positive discussion.

**Table 5-10: Data instruments, process, and analysis**

| <b>Data collection instruments</b>                                           | <b>Date collection process</b>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Analysis</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Questionnaires                                                               | Insightful information about their participation was gained from the questions posed to the participants.                                                                                                            | Data from the questionnaires revealed that all the participants were unemployed. The participants were wary about revealing their personal information for publication. <i>David 1</i> feared that I would expose his personal information on social media. |
| Co-participatory ART participation, observation, and shared lived experience | The CARER became part of the group being studied to gain deeper insights. Observations captured context and real-world settings, which provided rich, detailed data useful for exploring new or complex phenomena.   | Gaining trust was not easy, the participants felt way about participating in the body mapping. They expressed their lived experiences creatively from drawing on their cultural background on their maps.                                                   |
| Reflection journal                                                           | Participants kept reflection journals during the body mapping and the sustainable creative process exercises. They documented their lived experiences and reflected on all the exercises as a valid research method. | The participants struggled to reflect in a written form. Reflection journaling enhanced dialogue between the CARER and the participants.                                                                                                                    |

| <b>Data collection instruments</b>                    | <b>Date collection process</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Analysis</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Researcher-art, participant, and body map reflections | Body mapping can be used in various ways, both in group settings and individually, as a healing tool to recall memories, find solutions to problems, and, most importantly, express stories.                                                                                                            | Body mapping engages participants, enabling creative communication through a profound and reflective artistic process. After completing their full life-sized body maps, participants were surprised to comprehend the effects of what their substance use on their minds and bodies. This was an unexpected eye-opener for both the CARER and the participants. |
| Centre's art facilitator's reflection                 | The reflection on body mapping as a research tool for therapy and creativity was noteworthy and beneficial.                                                                                                                                                                                             | Various improvements in parts of their lives during treatment are considered. In future, the CARER facilitator plans to use body mapping during her art facilitation at the rehabilitation Centre. This could be regarded as a useful leave-behind of the research.                                                                                              |
| Methods of visual analysis                            | Three co-created components were included:<br><br>(i) Participants shared their lived experiences; (ii) life-size body maps were created that combined words, drawing and an interpretation key to decode various symbols; (iii) the body map symbols supported the meaning of each element integrated. | See analysis in sub-section 5.6.1.1 for a detailed analysis of the body maps.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Sustainable creative processes                        | The teaching of sustainable creative processes was linked to the body mapping sessions. The following skills were taught – printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, and bookbinding.                                                                                                                           | The participants enjoyed learning new creative skills and some could see how these could perhaps be used in future to sustain themselves.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

### 5.5.6 Case 2 analysis

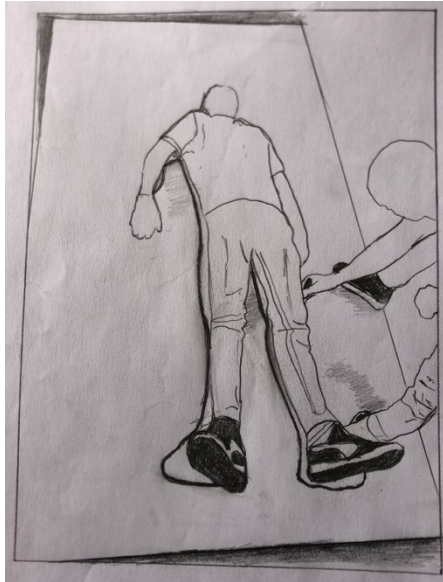
The study employed thematic analysis and coding to shape the findings. The analysis and outcomes supported the relevance of a thematic approach. Through thematic analysis, the research was linked to various concepts and opinions expressed by participants. This method enabled the coding and categorisation of data into significant themes, offering a broad understanding of the participants' experiences.

**Table 5-11: Phase 2 data collection**

| <b>Data Collection</b>   |                      |                                                                |                  |                                        |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Source</b>            | <b>Created by</b>    | <b>ABR methods &amp; purpose</b>                               | <b>Data Type</b> | <b>Outcome</b>                         |
| Lived experience         | Participant          | Body mapping drawing to express the body as a lived experience | Visual           | Body Map                               |
| Lived experience         | Participant          | Reflecting                                                     | Narrative        | Participant diary                      |
| Body map activity        | Facility facilitator | Observing/reflecting                                           | Narrative        | Reflection report                      |
| Body map activity        | Artist/researcher    | Observing/reflecting                                           | Narrative        | Field notes                            |
| <b>Data Analysis</b>     |                      |                                                                |                  |                                        |
| Participant interactions | Artist/researcher    | Artistic expression                                            | Visual           | Artistic representation of participant |
| Body map                 | Artist/researcher    | Visual elicitation of artistic forms; aesthetic interpretation | Visual           | Findings                               |
| Participant diary        | Artist/researcher    | Thematic analysis                                              | Narrative        | Findings                               |
| Field notes              | Artist/researcher    | Thematic analysis                                              |                  | Findings                               |
| Reflection report        | Facility facilitator | Thematic analysis                                              | Narrative        | Findings                               |

#### 5.5.6.1 Body mapping visual analysis

Table 5-12: body mapping for each participant



Tracing outlines was critical for all the exercises that followed in the body mapping process. Two participants demonstrated the exercise with a participant as his partner. The partner lay down on the life size cardboard in two different positions to enable viewers to see the whole body in its fullest proportions. Participants were tasked to trace the first outline to reflect how they felt about participating at the start of the body mapping with a black permanent marker. The second outline was done after the lino printing process in a broad red painted line to differentiate the two poses. The anticipated outlines were not alike.





Name, surname, pseudo name, and date of birth were written in the top right corner of the brown sheet. *Black Smeath* – “my skin colour is black, and my surname is Smith”.

During a creative body mapping exercise, his first pose was straight, legs slightly apart with his arms crossed, showing he was unsure about the body mapping when he first entered the art studio. Later, he created a second pose after participating in the lino printing on paper and fabric. He placed this new figure on top of the first. His second body language conveyed a feeling of calmness and confidence. He painted the inside of his first body purple, which is his favourite colour.

He painted the inside of this second body white to make it stand out. Inside the white space, he drew a detailed skeleton, focusing especially on the intestines.

The body mapping activity encouraged him to share personal memories. In the white space of his right arm, he showed a childhood injury—a broken wrist—and he drew a broken middle finger on the skeleton’s right hand that he broke a few years earlier. On his upper left arm, he wrote that during his time in rehab, he had gained weight and improved his eating habits.

He included drawings of a pen and a book to show his love for drawing and writing poetry. Sports were important to him, especially cricket and football. Having completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade at Umtata International School, he painted the school emblem and was proud. He wrote that he intended to use the new printmaking skills gained to support himself.

In the top left corner, he chose a Jaguar to symbolise how he wanted to live after rehab—fearless and willing to take risks to better his life.

One of the most powerful images was inside his mouth: a ‘Lollie’—a glass pipe used for smoking crystal meth. He explained how the drug made him feel energetic but dependent. Behind his self-portrait, he drew his brain, showing how meth affected his thoughts and caused him to lose weight. Through this body mapping experience, he began to understand the deep harm the drug had caused him. Seeing the completed body map upright for the first time, the amalgamation of words and symbols helped him grasp the detrimental effects of his drug consumption. A powerful round circle with a red ‘X’ on the device symbolised his determination to say no to drugs.

In the classroom, before the presentations, participants held up their completed body maps to be photographed, and I observed each participant’s reaction. They viewed their maps upright and from a distance for the first time. Participants were amazed and proud of their achievements. However, *Black Smeath*’s reaction was noteworthy. For the first

time, he understood how drug consumption affected his body. Through words and symbols on his body map, we were both educated. He communicated his experience in detail with enthusiasm and excitement, reflecting on the creative skills he obtained to use in the future.



On a large brown sheet, the participant wrote his name, surname, a nickname '*David 2*' to symbolise strength like David and his date of birth in the top right corner.

For the body mapping activity, he chose a pose to show how he felt when he arrived at the art studio. He stood tall, with his legs close together and his arms slightly lifted away from his body drawn with a black koki. He verbally reflected that he felt a bit nervous about the unknown and was unsure of his pose.

Later, he created a second figure on top of the first to show how he felt after completing lino printing on paper and fabric, outlined with a thick red line. This time, his pose was full of energy, with his arms and legs stretched out from his centre. He filled his first body with his favourite colour, yellow.

A layer of white paint separated the two figures. Inside the white space, he drew a skeleton and detailed the intestines, using his body to tell a deeper, personal story.

'*David 2*' found it difficult to draw the skeleton on his body map, needing assistance. He had trouble sketching the ribs and placing some of the other bones. His observation of the skeleton was unpredictable yet showed some understanding. He used limited words on his map.

In his artwork, he included a cake that represented the celebration of his recent birthday. He loved carpentry, drawing a saw and a cutting knife. His passion for cricket was shown by a symbol of a cricket bat and ball was captured on his map.

In the top left corner, he chose a cockatiel to represent himself, remembering the pet bird he had as a child. He recalled the songs they shared, using the image of the bird to show his wish for freedom and his hopes to use his creativity for future business opportunities.

Near his mouth, he drew a bottle of beer to symbolise his past struggles with addiction. Over it, he placed a red circle with a white line through it—a strong visual statement of his decision to reject alcohol use.

*David 2* could not reflect in words on his body map. However, he was incredibly proud of his body map and confidently narrated his experiences and future endeavours using his acquired creative skills to sustain himself.



On a large brown sheet, the participant wrote his name, surname, a nickname – ‘David 1’ to symbolise strength – and his date of birth in the top right corner.

For his first pose, he chose a crouching position and reported that he was feeling sick. He was sent to the sick bay and could not attend the exercises fully. I was informed that participants in rehabilitation generally fake their illnesses to not participate in activities. For the second pose, after participating in the lino printing on paper and fabric, he changed posture. This time, he looked relaxed and confident, with his right arm resting on his chest, his legs crossed, and his left arm stretched away from his body.

He coloured his first figure in blue and painted his second body white to separate it from the first and added careful drawings of a skeleton and intestines. He only outlined his second pose after completing the skeleton. He did not mention any past injuries.

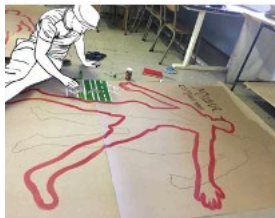
On the right side of his body map, he drew images showing his love for cars and the ocean, sharing that he enjoyed swimming. On the left side, he wrote about the creative skills he had learned, reflecting that eco-dyeing was his favourite skill. He hopes to use this skill to start a small business making paper and fabric products.

In the top left corner, he drew a bird to symbolise freedom, showing his dream of traveling, experiencing new things, and learning more.

Throughout the project, he found himself more focused and connected to his feelings. He saw body mapping as powerful therapy that helped him face and work through his addiction to ‘tik’. To show his commitment to stay away from drugs, he drew a large red ‘X’ over a ‘lollie’ and added a hand gesture meaning “stop.” To strengthen his message, he wrote “say no to drugs” multiple times, showing his strong decision to leave drug use behind.

*David 1* mentioned his fear of public speaking. He became more confident during his presentation and explained his body map well. He reflected on his experiences and valued the creative skills he acquired and planned to teach his children and his family.





In the top right corner, the participant wrote his name, surname, nickname “Mabra” (a nickname from his childhood), and date of birth.

He chose a walking pose, expressing feelings of excitement mixed with uncertainty, in a black koki drawing. For his second pose, drawn over the first one, his posture was confident and ready. To separate the two poses, he filled the first body in red and the second body with a white background and carefully drew a detailed skeleton inside, including the intestines.

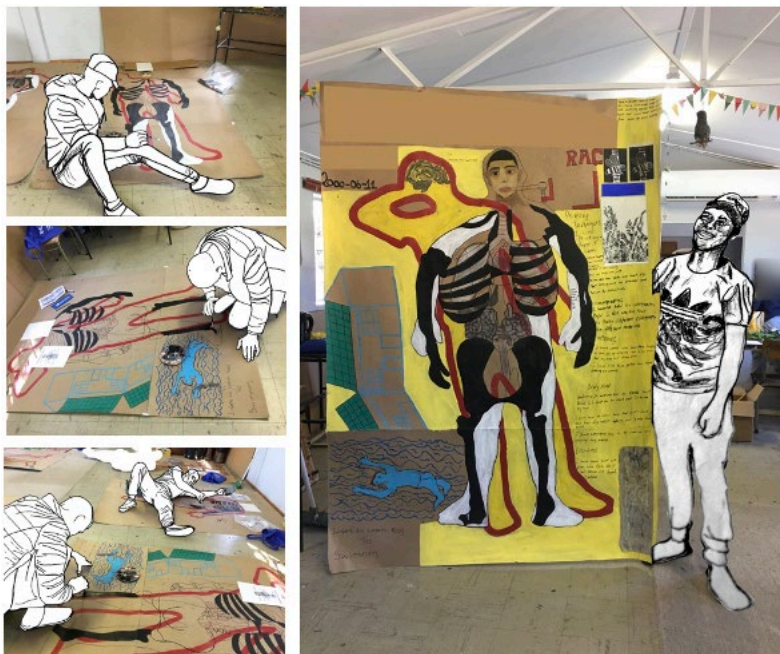
As part of telling his personal story, he marked a red spot on his shoulder to remember his first experience drinking alcohol, which happened after jumping over a fence. Other red spots marked mosquito bites and a rugby injury.

Mabra’s body map revealed more about his life. He showed how much he loved his son by drawing a birthday cake for an upcoming celebration. He also highlighted his passion for rugby, describing the field as a place where he feels happy and free, writing, “I feel happy and stress-free in between those lines.” In the spaces between his legs and on the left side of his body, he wrote about the creative skills he had learned, especially weaving, which he particularly enjoyed.

In the top left corner, he drew a lion to represent bravery and leadership - qualities he hopes to show as he leads his family after leaving rehab, using his new skills to support them.

Throughout the body mapping journey, Mabra grew emotionally stronger. He found focus, calmness, clearer thinking, and new creative strength. He iterated that drawing helped him build confidence. He also addressed his past struggles with addiction, especially beer, by drawing a red ‘no drinking’ symbol to show his firm decision to stay substance-free.

*Mabra* presented his body map calmly and reflected on all his experiences. He positively expressed and envisioned that using printmaking skills could make a difference in his life and support his family in the future.



Name, surname, pseudo name, and date of birth were written in the top right corner of the brown sheet. His pseudonym was *Changes Scott*.

The participant selected a stance that encapsulated his emotions upon entering the art studio. His right arm cradled his head, reflecting a sense of wonderment.

His new posture showed confidence, reflecting the pride he felt in his creative work. He filled his first stance in his favourite colour, yellow. In the white space, he drew a skeleton and added intestines, using the body to tell his personal story. The result was detailed, expressive, and had a playful, childlike quality.

In the white area of his left arm, he marked a memory from childhood – a car accident that had left him with a cracked arm. Between his ribs, he wrote about the weight he had gained during his time in the facility, showing changes in his physical and emotional state.

On the right side of his body map, he drew his school and expressed a goal to learn how to swim. On the left, he carefully described each of the creative activities he took part in, explaining how he plans to use his new skills in the future.

In the top left corner, he chose a bee as his symbol. The bee stood for hard work and his wish to apply that same determination toward starting a small business. He had the natural ability to do lino and collagraph printing and was delighted that the other participants noticed his skill and praised him.

He reflected that the body mapping process helped him release stress and feel more emotionally balanced. It gave him space to reflect, relax, and think more clearly. A drawing of a 'lollie', the glass pipe, stood out, marked with a big red backward "L." This symbol captured his past struggle with drugs. Alongside it, he wrote the acronym "RAC," which stands for "recovery and to say no to drugs," as a strong message of his commitment to change.

*Changes Scott* was anxious to reflect on his body map before an audience. He was more comfortable describing his experiences in his mother tongue. I articulated his

|  |                                                                                                                          |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | involvement with the creative process. He was elated to acquire printmaking skills and excited to do more in the future. |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The facilitator and participants' reflections were combined and coded to develop the themes for the body mapping data.

**Table 5-13: An excerpt of the body mapping themes**

| Theme            | Sub theme       | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Key concept                               |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Context          | Compromised     | Research in underserved areas must address cultural stigmas and how NEET status influences well-being.                                                                                                                  | Cultural considerations                   |
| Context          | Cultural        | Researchers should align with cultural norms to engage participants effectively.                                                                                                                                        | Cultural adaptation                       |
| Culture          | Cultural        | Navigating diverse environments demanded adaptability and cultural sensitivity.                                                                                                                                         | Adaptability and cultural sensitivity     |
| Participation    | Ethics          | A deep understanding of participants' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds was essential for fostering trust, ensuring safety, and maintaining respectful relationships.                                             | Trust and respect                         |
| Participation    | Collaboration   | Long-term collaboration with community members is crucial to safeguard research values, cultural dynamics, which are beneficial to all parties involved.                                                                | Collaborative partnerships                |
| Challenges       | Institutional   | rehabilitation Centres.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Balancing goals and constraints           |
| ART              | Positionality   | The literature highlighted that the ART were not purely an insider but co-participated with individuals identities which influenced the research process.                                                               | Complex dynamics                          |
| Context          | Situated        | The ART collaborated with substance abuse users as co-participants, influencing and shaping the research process. In addition, worked in unpredictable and challenging settings, often within compromised environments. | Complex dynamics                          |
| Lived experience | Sense of group  | The ART needed to report for participants' views, challenges, and online expectations during the pandemic.                                                                                                              | Consideration of participants' perception |
| ART              | Positionality   | The ART needed to account for participants' views, challenges, and expectations                                                                                                                                         | Consideration of participants' perception |
| Reflections      | ART reflections | Reflexivity was fundamental for understanding participants' needs, mitigating factors, and acknowledging the impact of the ARTs reflections.                                                                            | Importance of reflexivity                 |
| ART              | Positionality   | research.                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Emerging researchers                      |
| Lived experience | Positionality   | The ARTs perceptions were not consistent with the realities observed in a substance abuse Centre.                                                                                                                       | Alignment of perceptions and realities    |
| Lived experience | Being resilient | enhancing well-being.                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Positive reception and engagement         |
| Creativity       | Being creative  | Positive outcomes were crucial for mutual well-being, while creative interventions contribute to improved well-being through shared purpose and meaning.                                                                | Importance of positive outcomes           |
| Lived experience | Sense of future | Positive outcomes are important for mutual well-being, while highlighting that online interventions contributed to improved well-being through shared commitment and meaning.                                           | Importance of positive outcomes           |
| Space            | Online          | well-being and engagement.                                                                                                                                                                                              | Flexibility and problem-solving           |
| Participation    | Ethics          | engagement.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Ethical considerations                    |
| Participation    | Ethics          | Ethical research focused on remaining sensitive to cultural nuances and understanding participant perceptions.                                                                                                          | Cultural sensitivity and awareness        |



### 5.5.6.2 Challenges experienced in the field

Facilitating body mapping in a rehabilitation centre with individuals recovering from substance use benefited recovery using creative methods for self-expression and reflection. The employment of arts-based approaches supported participants in exploring their personal stories, emotions, and experiences in a visual way that they found hard to express with words. However, challenges, including initial resistance, lack of trust, emotional triggers, and confidence, were evident. Creating a safe and supportive environment was essential to encourage participation and to remain flexible in facilitation to meet the needs of each person.

**Table 5-14: Excerpt of the challenges experienced in the field**

| Theme         | Sub theme from code | Overarching challenges               |                                 |                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Challenges    | Institutional       | Challenges in facilitation           | Facilitation difficulties       | The workshop faced challenges due to stringent rules, lack of support, and evolving issues such as managing participants and tools                             |
| Reflections   | Embodied reflection | Challenges in facilitation           | Time-consuming process          | The body mapping process was intense, requiring deep cognitive engagement and self-reflection, leading to exhaustion for both the facilitator and participants |
| Creativity    | Creative process    | Resource and support issues          | Lack of support                 | The ART struggled with scribing and managing tasks alone, highlighting the need for additional support.                                                        |
| Challenges    | Institutional       | Resource and support issues          | Unavailability of staff         | The nurse and art ART were only available on Fridays, creating challenges on weekends.                                                                         |
| Space         | Safe                | Safety concerns                      | Managing sharp tools            | The facilitator had to be vigilant in handling sharp tools needed for printmaking, ensuring they were collected and stored safely after each session.          |
| Creativity    | Creative process    | Safety concerns                      | Managing sharp tools            | The facilitator had to be vigilant in handling sharp tools needed for printmaking, ensuring they were collected and stored safely after each session.          |
| Participation | Participant         | Safety concerns                      | Incidents with Participants     | Issues like a participant sniffing thinners and another hiding a knife raised safety concerns, requiring the ART to be more attentive.                         |
| Space         | Safe                | Safety concerns                      | Incidents with Participants     | Issues like a participant sniffing thinners and another hiding a knife raised safety concerns, requiring the ART to be more attentive.                         |
| Participation | Participant         | Participant engagement and behaviour | Participant Struggles           | Participants found it difficult to manage their program tasks, chores, and reflection homework, leading to mood changes and reluctance to continue.            |
| Participation | Participant         | Participant engagement and behaviour | Negative attitudes              | The reluctance of one participant to continue affected the group's morale, necessitating intervention from the nurse and ART to mitigate the situation         |
| Creativity    | Creative process    | Impact of intense activities         | Exhaustion                      | The intense nature of body mapping and sustainable creative processes led to physical and mental exhaustion for all involved                                   |
| Participation | Participant         | Impact of intense activities         | Cognitive and Emotional Demands | The workshops required significant cognitive effort and emotional reflection, which was challenging for participants.                                          |
| Creativity    | Creative process    | Impact of intense activities         | Cognitive and Emotional Demands | The workshops required significant cognitive effort and emotional reflection, which was challenging for participants.                                          |

Balancing goals and constraints, the CARER needed to support research aims with the rules and restrictions of host institutions, such as rehabilitation centres. The CARER operated in complex research environments, which required focusing on building relationships, obtaining ethical clearance, and integrating into participants' environments.

The workshop faced challenges in facilitation due to stringent rules, lack of support, and evolving issues such as managing participants and tools. Art resources were in short supply because of the lack of timely institutional procurement, causing stress. In addition, the facility's facilitator was only available during the week, creating support challenges on weekends. Managing tasks alone highlighted the need for additional support.

The impact of intense creative activities, the intense focus required for the time-consuming nature of body mapping, and sustainable creative processes led to physical and mental exhaustion for both the CARER and participants. The workshops required deep cognitive and emotional reflection, which was challenging for participants.

Participants were comfortable in the space and felt safe. The CARER was prewarned to be vigilant in handling sharp tools needed for printmaking. Safety was a primary concern, and the CARER ensured that the tools were collected and stored safely after each session. Thinners



were necessary to clean oil-based ink from tools and linoleum for reuse. Incidents reported included a participant caught sniffing thinners and another pocketing a cutting knife, raising safety concerns with the institution and requiring the CARER to police.

The CARER reflected on process development concerns during the creative process. Participants' first language was not English, and they struggled to understand instructions. Some were, however, comfortable with Afrikaans. To overcome language barriers, participants spoke in their mother tongue. The participant who suffered from dysgraphia was concerned and needed support.

Participants struggled to manage their programme tasks, chores, and reflection homework, which led to mood changes and reluctance to continue. During the body map process, the reluctance of one participant to continue affected the group's morale, engagement, and behaviour, activating negative attitudes. The situation necessitated intervention from the nurse and the CARER to mitigate the problem.

**Table 5-15: Excerpt of the challenges related to the methods used**

|                      |                 |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participation        | Relationships   | observation' and shared lived co-participatory ART participation'            | to gain deeper insights' Observations captured the ART process but of the group being studied                                                                                                                   | participating in the body mapping' Participants expressed their lived to gain insight was not easy' the participants left weary about                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Lived experience     | Sense of future | experience observation' and shared lived co-participatory ART participation' | complex phenomenon' not' detailed data being for exploring new or context and less-often settings' which involved to gain deeper insights' Observations captured the ART process but of the group being studied | phenomenon' all data generated during the process experience described how their clinical background on their ways' participating in the body mapping' Participants expressed their lived to gain insight was not easy' the participants left weary about                                                                                                                                        |
| Creativity           | Being creative  | experience observation' and shared lived co-participatory ART participation' | complex phenomenon' not' detailed data being for exploring new or context and less-often settings' which involved to gain deeper insights' Observations captured the ART process but of the group being studied | phenomenon' all data generated during the process experience described how their clinical background on their ways' participating in the body mapping' Participants expressed their lived to gain insight was not easy' the participants left weary about                                                                                                                                        |
| Participation ethics |                 | Questionnaires                                                               | participants gained from the questions posed to the individual information about their participation was                                                                                                        | being in information on social media' information for publication' Data 1 (table 1) month exposure the time' the participants were wary about revealing their personal information' being a body mapping creative approaches to engage themselves in the new world' there was a need to address their experiences and well-being from the questionnaire was asked that all the participants were |
| Participation        | Participant     | Questionnaires                                                               | participants gained from the questions posed to the individual information about their participation was                                                                                                        | being in information on social media' information for publication' Data 1 (table 1) month exposure the time' the participants were wary about revealing their personal information' being a body mapping creative approaches to engage themselves in the new world' there was a need to address their experiences and well-being from the questionnaire was asked that all the participants were |
| Context              | Compromised     | Questionnaires                                                               | participants gained from the questions posed to the individual information about their participation was                                                                                                        | being in information on social media' information for publication' Data 1 (table 1) month exposure the time' the participants were wary about revealing their personal information' being a body mapping creative approaches to engage themselves in the new world' there was a need to address their experiences and well-being from the questionnaire was asked that all the participants were |
| Theme                | 2nd theme       | Data collection instruments                                                  | Data collection process                                                                                                                                                                                         | Analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

To understand the context of the individuals in compromised contexts, questionnaires were administered. Insightful information about their participation was gained from their responses. Data from the questionnaires revealed that the participants were unemployed. There was a need to advance their capabilities and well-being by employing creative processes to sustain themselves in the future. One participant was wary about revealing his personal information for publication and feared that the CARER might expose it on social media. Participant participation was important because their progress in the rehabilitation centre was assessed. Ethical considerations were consistently upheld.

Co-participatory ART-based participation was taught using sustainable creative processes to advance creative skill development by doing and learning. Creativity enabled a shared lived experience to be observed. Observations captured context and real-world settings, which provided rich data useful for exploring new or complex phenomena. Observation and shared participation fostered relationships and a sense of the future. The CARER became part of the group under study to gain deeper insights.

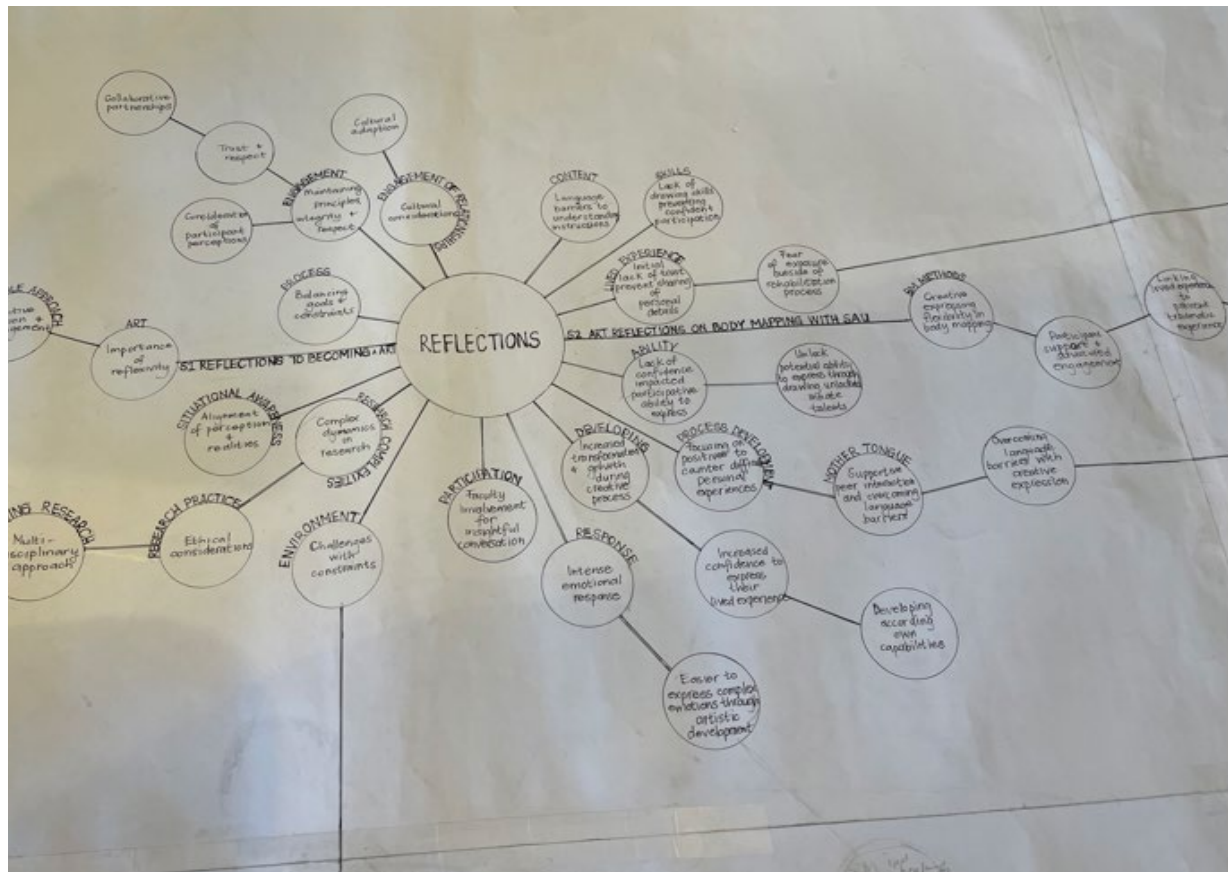
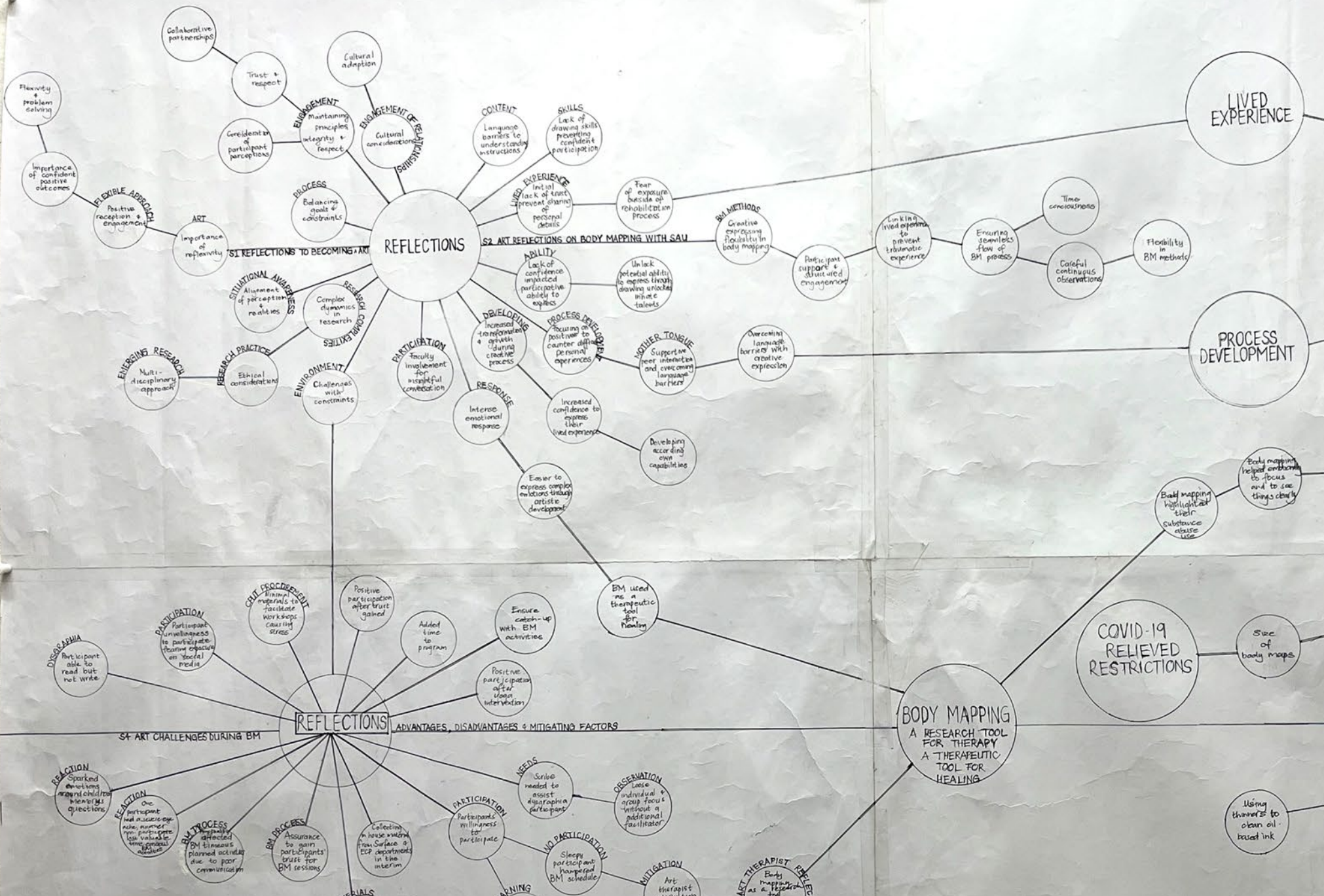


**Figure 5-12: Artistic expression of the CARER's thematic data analysis**

This artistic expression captured the ART's analysis through visual storytelling, translating participants' experiences, emotions, and growth into powerful creative forms. It reflected the transformative impact of art-based methods in exploring identity, healing, and resilience.





Teaching reflections in line with relaxed COVID-19 restrictions revealed the substance use lived experience while participating in sustainable printmaking and body mapping processes.

**Table 5-16: An excerpt of the teaching reflections**

| Theme            | Sub theme       | Reflection                                                                                                   | Participant feedback                                                                                                                                    | Teaching         |                                           |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Methods          | Teach           | The size of the space was sufficient to accommodate a small group and the human size body maps               |                                                                                                                                                         | Small group size | In line with COVID19 relaxed restrictions |
| Space            | Creative        | The size of the space was sufficient to accommodate a small group and the human size body maps               |                                                                                                                                                         | Small group size | In line with COVID19 relaxed restrictions |
| Creativity       | Creative skills | Teaching how to use carving tools for carving techniques. Using sharp tools and thinners for cleaning safely |                                                                                                                                                         | Lino print       | From drawing using window to trace        |
| Lived experience | Sense of future | Teaching how to use carving tools for carving techniques. Using sharp tools and thinners for cleaning safely | <i>Changes Scott was elated to acquire printmaking skills and excited to do more in the future.</i>                                                     |                  |                                           |
| Lived experience | Sense of future | Teaching how to use carving tools for carving techniques. Using sharp tools and thinners for cleaning safely | <i>Mabra positively expressed and envisioned that using printmaking skills could make a difference in his life to support his family in the future.</i> |                  |                                           |

The above datasets were included in the code book, and the following seven themes were derived from 145 sub-themes.

## 5.6 Case 2 Themes

**Table 5-17: Themes and sub-themes derived for the second case**

| Themes            | Sub-theme         | Count     |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| <b>CARER</b>      |                   | <b>21</b> |
|                   | Positionality     | 3         |
|                   | Sustainable art   | 3         |
|                   | Teach             | 13        |
|                   | Research          | 2         |
| <b>Challenges</b> |                   | <b>16</b> |
|                   | Global challenges | 1         |
|                   | Institutional     | 11        |
|                   | Life challenges   | 4         |

|                         |                     |            |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| <b>Context</b>          |                     | <b>7</b>   |
|                         | Compromised         | 3          |
|                         | Cultural            | 3          |
|                         | Situated            | 1          |
| <b>Creativity</b>       |                     | <b>22</b>  |
|                         | Being creative      | 7          |
|                         | Creative process    | 12         |
|                         | Creative skills     | 3          |
| <b>Lived experience</b> |                     | <b>20</b>  |
|                         | Being resilient     | 2          |
|                         | Positionality       | 1          |
|                         | Sense of future     | 9          |
|                         | Sense of group      | 3          |
|                         | Sense of self       | 5          |
| <b>Participation</b>    |                     | <b>46</b>  |
|                         | Collaboration       | 1          |
|                         | Creative process    | 1          |
|                         | Ethics              | 12         |
|                         | Outcome             | 6          |
|                         | Participant         | 20         |
|                         | Relationships       | 6          |
| <b>Reflections</b>      |                     | <b>5</b>   |
|                         | (a-r-t) reflections | 4          |
|                         | Embodied reflection | 1          |
| <b>Space</b>            |                     | <b>8</b>   |
|                         | Creative            | 1          |
|                         | Online              | 2          |
|                         | Safe                | 4          |
|                         | Situated            | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>            |                     | <b>145</b> |

Next, the analysis of the themes is described to conclude with a summary finding.

### 5.6.1 Lived Experience (Theme 1)

Table 5-18: Sub-themes for theme 1

|                 |
|-----------------|
| Being resilient |
| Positionality   |
| Sense of future |
| Sense of group  |
| Sense of self   |

Participants' positive feedback, optimism, and resilience underscored the effectiveness of arts-based research in enhancing well-being, which led to positive reception and engagement. The CARER reflected that remaining positive during body mapping participation made it easier to access complex emotions. Participants' positive feedback, optimism, and resilience highlighted the impact of arts-based research in improving well-being, resulting in strong engagement and a welcoming reception.

The CARER's perceptions did not fully align with the actual circumstances and experiences observed in the rehabilitation centre, highlighting a gap between expectations and reality. It was helpful that the CARER is familiar with the dialect of the language spoken by the target group, which became the main mode of communication. This afforded the CARER an insider positionality.

Gaining the trust of participants in the body mapping sessions was challenging at first, as many were hesitant to engage. However, once involved, they shared their life experiences creatively, often reflecting their cultural backgrounds. A shared theme emerged: individuals struggling with substance use expressed a need for hope and a sense of a better future. Co-participatory ART participation, observation, and shared lived experience formed part of the study to gain deeper insights. Through co-participatory observation, the CARER became part of the group to better understand the reality. This approach offered rich, real-world insights into their environment, useful for exploring new or complex phenomena.

**Sense-of-group.** During the pandemic, the CARER facilitator captured participants' views, challenges, and expectations regarding online engagement. Considering their viewpoints was crucial. The art facilitator of the rehabilitation centre observed that the participants had experienced positive changes during the body map process in different areas of their lives. She plans to apply body mapping during art facilitation at the substance use centre. Her reflection highlighted that body mapping was an effective tool providing participants with advantages in both therapeutic and creative contexts.

**Sense of self.** Individuals developed a stronger sense of self-discovery and growing confidence through co-participation in the art and body mapping process. They created at their own pace, discovering more about themselves and their lived experiences through personal reflection. Reflection journaling improved communication between ART and the participants. Throughout the body mapping and the sustainable creative process exercises, participants kept reflection journals. These journals served as a valuable research method by documenting their thoughts and responses to each activity.

Through an artistic process, body mapping encouraged participants, enabling creative communication. It supported memory recall, personal storytelling, and problem-solving,

making it an essential part of the therapeutic and creative process. Through the probing process, the participants gained a better understanding of themselves and the harm their drug use has on their bodies.

After the completion of the ABR activity of body mapping, participants were astonished and better comprehended the effect of their substance use on their minds and bodies. This realisation was powerful and unexpected for both the CARER and participants. Body mapping emerged as a versatile healing tool in group and individual settings for understanding current lived experiences and a need for hope for a better future.

### 5.6.2 Space (Theme 2)

**Table 5-19: Sub-themes for theme 2**

|          |
|----------|
| Creative |
| Online   |
| Safe     |
| Situated |

The available art space was ideal for hosting a small group and accommodate the full-scale body maps, aligning with relaxed COVID-19 restrictions and allowing safe distancing. To comply with pandemic restrictions, alternative digital platforms such as Google Forms/Sheets, Facebook, and WhatsApp were used for participant engagement and data collection. The CARER had to be flexible in overcoming online challenges with adaptability, addressing technical issues, encouraging engagement, and prioritising participants' well-being. Incidents of a participant inhaling thinners and another concealing a knife highlighted the need for heightened safety measures and vigilance from ART. Printmaking sessions were carefully monitored, requiring strict control of sharp tools, which were securely stored after use to ensure safety. Some participants expressed anxiety about vulnerability and exposure through body mapping, particularly outside the rehabilitation context.

To become a CARER during the body map sessions, creative-analytic awareness was highlighted to (i) participants sharing deep personal lived experiences, (ii) life-size body maps were created, integrating words, images, and symbolic interpretations, (iii) these symbolic elements helped convey and decode the deeper meanings embedded in each artwork.

Space as an *in situ* place of safety is important to allow individuals to be vulnerable when participating in ABR probing methods, such as body mapping. Regardless of space being virtual or physical, it is essential to mitigate any potential negative reactions. This requires a facilitator in the role of space protector, being flexible and responsible for emotional responses and the responsible use of art tools.

### 5.6.3 CARER (Theme 3)

Table 5-20: Sub-themes for theme 3

|                 |
|-----------------|
| Positionality   |
| Sustainable art |
| Teach           |
| Research        |

**Positionality** - The literature highlighted that the CARER was not purely an insider but a co-participant with individuals' identities, which influenced the research process. The drawing skills of the participants varied, and some needed help and encouragement to gain confidence. They reflected improvements in their drawing abilities and general creative process as a result of the creative activities. Becoming a CARER brought to light the intricacy of arts-based research. It influenced research practice and informed new research methodologies.

*Mabra* stated that he could not draw, yet displayed considerable drawing skills with minimal guidance, suggesting latent ability. Employing ABR methods surfaced these latent skills through practice. The creative process of body mapping as an arts-based research method allowed his creative ability to surface without prior learning. He was able to assist struggling participants. This experience led me to approach teaching drawing differently, acknowledging that such skills may be latent as opposed to teaching university students who are accepted into the design course based on demonstrated drawing skills.

Teaching sustainable printmaking methods included linoleum and collagraph printing techniques. Participants understood that high-quality prints on paper and fabric could be saleable. Collagraph plates were made using off-cut cardboard. The participants enjoyed collagraph printing and were very determined to print good-quality prints. *Mabra* positively expressed and envisioned that using sustainable printmaking skills and weaving could make a difference in his life and support his family in the future.

Teaching eco-dyeing is an effective method since it is affordable, accessible, sustainable, and eco-friendly. Materials are commonly recycled from one's immediate vicinity or discovered in nature. This practical method may be therapeutic. In addition to encouraging creativity and experimentation, the technique fosters mindfulness and sensory engagement.

Eco-dyeing involved boiling plant matter with rusted metal items to create prints on paper. *David 1* especially appreciated these skills and hoped to pass them on to his children. He valued eco-dyeing for future projects. Fresh plant matter was used to eco-dye off-cut paper to create prints. Weaving was taught using discarded wood, nails, yarn, and leather to build simple handlooms. *Mabra* showed a keen interest in continuing with weaving to create useful items.



Teaching individuals how to use sharp carving tools safely and thinners for cleaning was important to ensure safe, informed use of materials and equipment. Changes Scott was elated to acquire linoleum printmaking skills and excited to do more in the future. He demonstrated a natural ability. Buying art equipment is not always required; participants learned to trace using a window. Their creative skills were developed through creative processes. *Mabra* also expressed a strong desire to use printmaking to improve his future and support his family.

The eco-dyed paper was utilised as covers for handmade books to link two outcomes. Participants were taught to make different types of books by repurposing paper and cardboard into professional, handmade books. They all received a kit to continue with the bookbinding to sustain themselves. *David 2* expressed his future endeavours to use his acquired creative skills to sustain himself, especially enjoying bookbinding. Bookbinding was facilitated by a professional bookbinder. All participants were excited about the prospects of using their bookbinding skills to sustain themselves.

Both skill development and emotional healing were supported by these creative workshops. Positive comments demonstrated the importance of these group artistic activities in enhancing general well-being, and participants found purpose and motivation.

The CARER accounted for participants' perceptions, challenges, and expectations, accentuating the need for awareness of emerging researchers' prejudices to maintain rigour in qualitative research.

Incorporating my artistic approach into my teaching allowed me to focus on creative processes and materials that are easily available, thus supporting sustainable art. Becoming an art teacher allowed me to unlock art in others by developing their skills. Considering ABR, as a research strategy, provided me with the opportunity to base my artistic approach and teaching experience in a research environment, becoming a competent researcher, learning about the intricacies of research through ABR. My positionality transitioned from artist to artist-teacher to researcher.

#### 5.6.4 Reflections (Theme 4)

**Table 5-21: Sub-themes for theme 4**

|                     |
|---------------------|
| ART reflections     |
| Embodied reflection |

The importance of reflexivity and evolving into a CARER, entails understanding participants' needs. Resolving issues and acknowledging how (a-r-ts) reflections influenced the process required a flexible, reflective approach. Reflectivity was necessary to properly negotiate the complexities of the creative process.

The CARER and the participants found the process of body mapping facilitation and embodied reflection challenging and exhausting, involving significant emotional and cognitive engagement. The time-consuming facilitation was important for understanding the participants' lived experiences, contributing to emotional energy.

### 5.6.5 Creativity (Theme 5)

**Table 5-22: Sub-themes for theme 5**

|                  |
|------------------|
| Being creative   |
| Creative process |
| Creative skills  |

Forming trust relationships with the participants allowed them to feel more at ease expressing themselves creatively. However, gaining substance users' trust was not easy. Trust and a secure environment for interaction were gradually built through empathy and cultural awareness. By participating in the arts-based activities, the participants had opportunities to express themselves, be creative, and grow personally. This helped reduce their stress and supported their overall well-being.

The CARER needed to support teaching and learning strategies that emphasised the development of sustainable creativity and innovation, combined with critical thinking and practical skill growth. Beyond merely learning to be creative and reflect on self, body mapping gave substance users the freedom to express their cultural identities and tell stories using visuals and symbols. The study argued the view that shared creative processes led to growth for both participants and the CARER.

The act of gathering discarded items symbolised the creative ideas of the CARER and how introspection revealed meaning in worthless objects, promoting aesthetic renewal. Gathering, sorting, scrutinising, choosing, interpreting, and associating are examples of archive actions reminiscent of my creative practice, which is an embodied experience. Taking risks steered by passion brought out the mystery of embodied experience and opened paths to creative solutions. However, the CARER's ability to facilitate sustainable creative techniques freely was at times obstructed by the strict rules of the rehabilitation centre, especially when support from an additional facilitator or research assistant was unavailable. For example, I got into trouble for asking participants to collect fresh plant matter for eco-dyeing. The CARER did not know that participants were strictly forbidden to walk around the grounds to prevent them from leaving the centre.

A focus on positive outcomes was an important consideration in the creative processes to counter the existing negative feelings associated with the participants' lived realities. Gaining

trust to be accepted within the group was important to create a safe space for the collaborative group activities. Although the participants enjoyed the creative processes with a sense of achievement when they created the artworks, the associated reflections were difficult and emotionally taxing. The recording, administration, and management of the creative activities were cumbersome, and assistance is needed to allow the facilitator to focus on the creative activity.

### 5.6.6 Participation (Theme 6)

**Table 5-23: Sub-themes for theme 6**

|                  |
|------------------|
| Collaboration    |
| Creative process |
| Ethics           |
| Outcome          |
| Participant      |
| Relationships    |

Long-term collaborative partnerships with community members are crucial to safeguarding research values and cultural dynamics, beneficial to all parties involved. A flexible approach was necessary to become a CARER. Addressing ethical issues required flexibility, problem-solving skills, and a focus on participant comfort and engagement.

Understanding participant perceptions and remaining sensitive to cultural nuances were key to ethical research. Upholding research integrity while respecting institutional guidelines and ethical standards was non-negotiable. Maintaining integrity and respect was crucial to the study.

Data from the questionnaires revealed that all the participants were unemployed. There was a need to advance their capabilities and well-being by employing creative approaches to sustain themselves in the future. The participants were wary of revealing their personal information for publication. *David 1* feared that I would expose his personal information on social media. Insightful information about their participation was gained from the questions posed to the participants.

Following a yoga session, after an emotional outburst, the participants displayed increased willingness to engage in the creative process. In a later session, participation was lacking, and targeted interventions by the art therapist were implemented to re-engage individuals.

The appointment of one of the participants as class captain to assist the CARER led to better participation.

It is essential to consider participants' life realities when their circumstances have an emotional impact, which may prevent them from fully engaging in creative processes. This requires the

facilitator to be flexible and sensitive to participants' reactions in order to identify and mitigate problems as they arise. This requires a safe space and a trusting relationship, and the support of the partner organisation.

### 5.6.7 Challenges (Theme 7) (including context)

**Table 5-24: Sub-themes for theme 7**

|                   |
|-------------------|
| Global challenges |
| Institutional     |
| Life challenges   |

Facilitation was impacted by institutional challenges, such as delayed procurement and inconsistent availability of resources. At the rehabilitation centre, the art therapist was only present on Fridays, leaving gaps in support over the weekends. Logistical and scheduling issues contributed to difficulties in delivering consistent support.

The body mapping process highlighted the need for flexibility and adaptation, including overcoming language barriers by encouraging participants to support each other in their mother tongues. The process was intense and involved cognitive thinking, focusing, and deep self-reflection. It was time-consuming and particularly strenuous for both the CARER and the participants.

The CARER faced additional challenges with a participant who had dysgraphia, which required extra support and understanding during the reflective and documentation stages of the project.

In one of the printmaking activities, the class captain caught a participant sniffing thinners. Expelling the participant for an incident of this nature was the norm. The incident was brought to the on-duty nurse's attention, which required the CARER to be attentive. Being unprepared for these evolving challenges made the CARER particularly aware that additional support was necessary. The class captain assisted in observing and inspecting all sharp tools so they could be stored safely before everyone left the art classroom, which was extremely helpful.

Participant engagement presented another significant hurdle the CARER found as it was difficult to maintain consistent interest and energy among attendees. These struggles often led to shifts in group dynamics and demanded timely intervention to address emerging mood changes.

The intensity of the body mapping process added another layer of complexity. This demanding activity placed cognitive and physical strain on both the CARER and participants, often resulting in exhaustion and challenges in sustaining focus.

Together, these recurring themes highlighted the intricate realities of facilitating creative workshops with vulnerable participants in rehabilitation centres. They revealed the necessary balancing act to navigate regulatory constraints, resource limitations, safety protocols, and the emotional demands of fostering meaningful engagement.

Finding: The challenges of facilitating workshops in structured and resource-constrained environments are multifaceted and demanding. Strict regulations often complicate the management of sessions, leading to difficulties in adapting to the evolving nature of issues while receiving minimal institutional support. Resource and safety concerns further exacerbate pressures, with the CARER struggling with limited staff availability, the risks associated with managing sharp tools, and the critical responsibility of ensuring participant safety.

## **5.7 Chapter conclusion**

The data collected and interpreted attached meaning to the study. These findings provided the necessary insights to answer the research questions. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was valuable to the study in understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences in the lived world was valuable for the study.

In an online creative drawing exercise during COVID-19, the CARER worked in unpredictable environments with NEET youth participants in underserved and socioeconomically poor environments. The research process required careful attention to cultural considerations and their effects on substance users' well-being where cultural stigmas were apparent. For researchers to effectively connect with participants, it was necessary to adjust to local cultural norms. Sensitivity to these cultural nuances in participants' interpretations was essential for conducting ethical research. Navigating such complex environments required adaptability, cultural awareness, and a commitment to maintaining integrity and respect while adhering to institutional guidelines and ethical standards.

Building trust and respect with participants was vital. This involved gaining a deep understanding of the socio-economic and cultural contexts of NEET youth and substance users to foster respectful relationships and prevent harm. Collaborative partnerships with the participating communities played a significant role in ensuring the research process respected cultural dynamics and was mutually beneficial.

Working in these environments presented complex dynamics. The CARER collaborated closely with NEET youth and substance users as co-participants, which shaped and influenced the research process. The facilitation took place in unpredictable and challenging settings, requiring the CARER to consider participants' perspectives, challenges, and expectations. Understanding participant requirements, reducing biases, and recognising the researchers' impact on the process all required reflexivity.

While substance users often provided positive feedback and expressed optimism, the CARER observed that their perceptions did not always align with the realities within the substance use centre. However, the participants' reception to the research, particularly the body mapping exercises and sustainable creative skill-building activities, highlighted the effectiveness of these interventions in fostering well-being and providing hope for the future.

Positive outcomes were critical for both researchers and participants, as shared creative interventions helped enhance well-being through a sense of purpose and meaning. Despite the constraints and challenges posed by the substance use centre's dynamics, the CARER remained flexible, employing problem-solving strategies to prioritise participant comfort and engagement.

Ethical considerations were central to the process, with clear boundaries established to respect participants' autonomy and privacy. Relationship-building and obtaining ethical clearance were foundational steps in integrating into participants' environments. The research also emphasised the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to address creative skill gaps and implement body mapping techniques.

It was essential to establish mutual respect and trust with participants. To promote respectful interactions and avoid harm required developing a thorough understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of NEET youth and substance users. The process placed a strong emphasis on ethics, with clear boundaries established to respect participants' autonomy and privacy. Relationship-building and obtaining ethical clearance were foundational to integrating into participants' environments. The research also emphasised the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to address creative skill gaps and implement body mapping techniques.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION



## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings based on interpretive phenomenology, arts-based research, and autoethnography are combined. The purpose was not to compare the outcomes of the three research strategies, but to gain a deeper understanding of the artist, teacher, and researcher perspectives.

## 6.2 Summary of findings

Next, the seven combined findings and associated sub-themes are indicated, after which each theme is discussed and interpreted.

**Figure 6-1: Themes and relationships**

| Themes                  | Sub themes            | Count     |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| <b>CARER</b>            |                       | <b>24</b> |
|                         | Positionality         | 4         |
|                         | Research              | 2         |
|                         | Sustainable art       | 3         |
|                         | Teach Create Art      | 7         |
|                         | Teach Draw            | 8         |
| <b>Challenges</b>       |                       | <b>40</b> |
|                         | Compromised context   | 6         |
|                         | Contextual challenges | 1         |
|                         | Cultural              | 3         |
|                         | Global challenges     | 5         |
|                         | Institutional         | 11        |
|                         | Life challenges       | 6         |
|                         | Situated              | 1         |
|                         | Technology            | 7         |
| <b>Creativity</b>       |                       | <b>29</b> |
|                         | Being creative        | 12        |
|                         | Creative process      | 14        |
|                         | Creative skills       | 3         |
| <b>Lived experience</b> |                       | <b>41</b> |
|                         | Being resilient       | 5         |
|                         | Positionality         | 1         |
|                         | Sense of community    | 6         |
|                         | Sense of future       | 13        |
|                         | Sense of group        | 5         |
|                         | Sense of self         | 11        |
| <b>Participation</b>    |                       | <b>59</b> |
|                         | Collaboration         | 1         |
|                         | Creative process      | 1         |



|                    |                        |            |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
|                    | Ethics                 | 15         |
|                    | Mode                   | 4          |
|                    | Outcome                | 9          |
|                    | Participant            | 21         |
|                    | Participant            | 1          |
|                    | Relationships          | 7          |
| <b>Reflections</b> |                        | <b>8</b>   |
|                    | (a-r-t) reflections    | 6          |
|                    | Embodied reflection    | 1          |
|                    | Participant reflection | 1          |
| <b>Space</b>       |                        | <b>13</b>  |
|                    | Creative               | 2          |
|                    | Online                 | 2          |
|                    | Safe                   | 8          |
|                    | Situated               | 1          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       |                        | <b>214</b> |

Below is a summary of both cases and autoethnography findings, which represent the combined themes. The combined themes provide an opportunity for deeper understanding and are not a comparison between the different sets.

**Table 6-1: Combined thematic findings**

| Themes              | Case 1 Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Case 2 Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Autoethnography Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Combined Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Lived experience | The lived experience finding of the NEET youth is that every aspect of their lives is influenced by the socio-economic challenges experienced by their community, which was aggravated by the pandemic experienced on all levels from self to community. However, even though they indicated some ideas about a better future they felt pessimistic about any real change. | After the completion of the ABR activity of body mapping, participants were astonished and had a better comprehension of what their drug use was doing to their minds and bodies. This realisation was powerful and unexpected for both the CARER and participants. Body mapping emerged as a versatile healing tool in group and individual settings to gain a better understanding of the current lived experience, as well as the need for hope for a better future. | The CARER's lived experiences are shaped by the different layers of the environments that foster creativity and provide nurturing support. The transition from being an artist to art teacher, and becoming an arts-based teacher-researcher shaped one's identity. This enhanced identity is associated with standout thoughts and creative inspiration based on the influences of trusting relations with others. | An individual's lived experience depends on the environment and other influences of a phenomenon. Within a group, in a community, lived experience of the self is similar to others exposed to the same circumstances. Although the creative processes provided an idea about a possible better future, more future-specific skills are needed. |
| 2. Space            | The NEET youth felt unsafe in their environment, which has become part of their everyday living. The teaching of creative skills was hampered by their lack of drawing skills, which was even more difficult in a virtual space.                                                                                                                                           | Space as an <i>in situ</i> place of safety is important to allow individuals to be vulnerable when participating in ABR probing methods, such as, for example, body mapping. Regardless of space being virtual or physical, it is essential to mitigate any potential negative reactions. This requires a facilitator in the role of space protector, to be flexible and responsible for emotional responses and the responsible use of art tools.                      | A safe and nurturing space is needed for the transition process of identity changes to allow for reflexive growth. This is especially important when a person's wellbeing state is compromised by external environmental factors.                                                                                                                                                                                   | A safe space is needed to allow people to reflect on their lives and to confront the challenges they experience to become equipped for a better future.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3. CARER            | Due to circumstances related to the pandemic it was impossible to explore the transition into becoming an artist/researcher/ teacher beyond teaching drawing skills. The transition was to adapt to online teaching of drawing skills as opposed to face-to-face teaching. The CARER                                                                                       | Incorporating my artistic approach into my teaching allowed me to focus on creative processes and materials that are easily available, thus supporting sustainable art. Becoming an art teacher allowed me to unlock art in others by developing their skills. Considering ABR provided me with the opportunity to base my artistic approach and teaching experience in                                                                                                 | During the identity transition process, the roles of teacher and researcher were integrated alongside the artist identity, ensuring that the core essence of being an artist—creating valuable artwork using materials from one's environment responsibly—remained central to being an art teacher, and arts-based researcher.                                                                                      | The study showed that creative arts research depended on understanding art practice and co-created, embodied processes to support learning and researcher growth. The CARER developed her identity through reflection, using the “nest” metaphor to represent growth and readiness. While reflective journaling was challenging, it helped      |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                | also had to reconsider the research aspects in a virtual space to adapt to online art skills teaching.                                                                                                                                                 | a research environment to become a competent researcher, learning about the intricacies of research through ABR. My positionality transitioned from being an artist to an artist-teacher to become a researcher.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | build self-awareness. Participants used drawings, symbols, and metaphors to express complex emotions. For the ART, the found circular objects became personal symbols that deepened reflexivity. Creative reflection transformed experience into meaning, especially in rehabilitation settings. |
| 4. Reflections | The value of self-reflection for the youth group allowed them to learn more about themselves, even though reflecting was initially difficult for them. Online reflection made it even more difficult, having to consider so many new ways of engaging. | The CARER and the participants experienced a challenging yet exhausting experience due to the process of body mapping facilitation and embodied reflection, which involved significant emotional and cognitive engagement. The time-consuming facilitation was important to understand the participants' lived experience, contributing to emotional energy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Through a conscious and systematic examination of one's own assumptions, beliefs, and experiences in a particular situation makes it possible to change one's practices. Reflecting on one's artist, teacher and researcher identities separately, as well as on how each shapes the others allow for valuable insights in fostering creativity in others. Becoming aware of others' lived realities allows for an informed and suitable approach to nurture creative potential grounded in relevant research.                                                                                                                                   | Reflecting is a powerful mechanism for individuals to gain more <i>in situ</i> insights into the self, and relations with others in a particular environment. It allows for an identity shift based on the insights gained.                                                                      |
| 5. Creativity  | Teaching the youth creative processes to stimulate their creativity did not provide sufficient evidence of achieving creativity or understanding sustainable as a concept. However, an interest was created in its potential for a possible future.    | A focus on positive outcomes was an important consideration in the creative processes to cater to the existing negative feelings associated with the participants' lived realities. Gaining trust to be accepted within the group was important to create a safe space for the collaborative group activities. Although the participants enjoyed the creative processes with a sense of achievement when they created the artworks, the associated reflections were difficult and emotionally taxing. The recording, administration, and management of the creative activities were cumbersome, and assistance | Through creative processes, creativity became a tool for artistic expression, empowering vulnerable individuals to nurture their creative skills for potential opportunities and hope. Creative processes, with their inherent flexibility, can be leveraged to tailor teaching approaches and unlock the untapped creative potential of individuals in specific situations. This involves adapting teaching methods to suit diverse learning styles and needs. Creativity as artistic expression often uses personal symbols as metaphors to disclose meaning, such as the preference for circular symbols to represent a nest as a safe space. | Teaching creative processes allowed for the uncovering of latent skills in a trusting space. It provides individuals with the ability to express their feelings and ideas visually and could even be seen as potential opportunities for pursuing a possibly better future.                      |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | was needed to allow the facilitator to focus on the creative activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6. Participation | Participation was difficult because of the reliance on technology, which did not allow for demonstrating new skills in a space where the teacher is able to immediately determine the successful application of the taught skills. However, the youth did enjoy the drawing activity and were surprised by their ability to draw. Many were not able to continue with the activities because they did not have data to participate.       | It is important to consider participants' life realities when their circumstances affect them emotionally, which may prevent them from participating fully in creative processes. It requires the facilitator to be flexible and sensitive to their reactions to identify and mitigate problems as they arise. This requires a safe space and a trusting relationship and the support of the partner organisation.                                                                                                                                    | Active participation requires understanding others' perspectives, being empathetic, and adapting teaching approaches accordingly. Creating a safe and supportive space with a manageable group size is crucial for fostering trust and enabling effective collaboration.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Participation needs to be actively and responsively managed to allow each participant to benefit from the activities. Participation requires a safe, conducive space, and the facilitator needs to form relationships with each individual based on each unique circumstance. Teaching creative processes requires a reciprocating relationship with participants to avoid only transferring skills.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 7. Challenges    | Most of the challenges experienced were the result of the pandemic that aggravated socio-economic challenges typical in an already compromised context. However, technology-enabled participation, even though limited, had to be immediately adopted by adapting teaching practices without any prior warning for proper preparation. This could still lay the foundation for increased and better use of online learning in the future. | The challenges of facilitating workshops in structured and resource-constrained environments are multifaceted and demanding. Strict regulations often complicate the management of sessions, causing difficulties in adapting to the evolving nature of issues while receiving minimal institutional support. Resource and safety concerns further exacerbated the situation, as the CARER struggled with limited staff availability, the risks associated with managing sharp tools, and the critical responsibility of ensuring participant safety. | The research journey as a growth opportunity was influenced by personal, institutional, contextual, and technological challenges that required resilience and focus to overcome. Relying on technology aggravated the teaching of creative processes that were new to the participants. While the research journey offered significant growth opportunities, navigating personal, institutional, contextual, and technological challenges demanded unwavering resilience and focus. Notably, the reliance on technology sometimes hindered the teaching of new creative processes to participants, as it could inadvertently stifle their creative exploration and experimentation with something new to them. | In situations where target groups are affected by influences of a particular phenomenon, mitigating strategies to combat several challenges are needed. Most of the challenges are linked to the environment where the situation created by the phenomenon is present. Individuals' lived experiences are influenced by the situation as a result of the particular phenomenon. The use of technology provides both enabling and constraining influences on the teaching of creative processes. In some situations, it is the only means to proceed with technology-mediated teaching. |

## 6.3 Thematic discussion

Each of the combined themes is discussed next.

### 6.3.1 Lived experience (Theme 1)

Many participants indicated that they felt good when engaging in the sustainable creative activities, especially during body mapping. They valued the opportunity to express themselves and connect with others' experiences, especially during the pandemic. *"Participating in the research made me feel important as I was able to share my opinions. Hearing and seeing what others felt about the pandemic made me realise that we're all affected equally but in different ways"* [P36]. The activities enabled personal expression, self-discovery, and emotional release. Through creativity, the participants understood the effects of past trauma or behaviour. One participant explained how crystal meth made him feel energetic, but he now realised how meth affected his thoughts and caused him to lose weight.

After the completion of their full life-sized body maps, the substance users were astonished at what their drug use was doing to their minds and bodies. This discovery was a strong and surprising experience for both the CARER and the participants. Body mapping was a flexible and helpful method supporting storytelling, memory, and problem-solving in group and individual sessions. It also assisted individuals in connecting, healing, and expressing themselves with visuals and words (Gastaldo et al., 2012).

My journey as a CARER shaped my identity through lived experience and helped guide my engagement with the creative process. Being reflective helped me connect with participants, which supported healing and my growth. This confirms the view of Wolverson *et al.* (2015) that a focus on identity, flexibility, and handling challenges showed a sense of strength and complemented experiences of hope and growth during difficult times.

The study did not focus on formal art therapy. Still, the findings matched what art therapy research has shown: visual and body mapping helped with healing and worked as valuable research tools (Lys *et al.*, 2018); Macken et al., 2021). Reflecting on identity in the CARER process showed that creative facilitation was not just about creative methods but also about the researcher becoming. My experiences showed that my position as a researcher influenced how I connected with vulnerable communities. Art therapy and participatory arts literature supported the idea that making art can encourage individuals to understand themselves, heal from trauma, and feel more empowered (Malchiodi et al., 2003; McNiff, 2008).

Life-sized body mapping helped participants understand how drug use and trauma affected them, showing the healing power of creative expression. The study also offered a reflexive model to guide new researchers in understanding their positionality (Murray *et al.*, 2023). When participants viewed the effects of substance use, the size and creativity of the maps

made their insights significant (Smith, 2025). One participant drew a bottle of beer near his mouth on his body map, to symbolise his past struggles with addiction.

Artwork showed how lived experiences were shared and reshaped through creativity, helping people gain insight and find meaning (Gerber *et al.*, 2020). When a participant first viewed his completed body map upright, the amalgamation of words and symbols took them aback, and they gained insights into the detrimental effects of his drug use on his brain and intestines. Through words and symbols on his body map, we were both educated. Understanding trauma was further enhanced by shared narratives influenced by addiction and the pandemic.

My research showed how I, as the CARER, and the participants grew together through the creative process. This contributes toward the reporting of shared growth, as indicated by Leavy (2015). Barone and Eisner (2012) find that shared growth between the facilitator and the participants is not well reported. Using a reflective approach combined with layers of insight, I created an uncomplicated way to show how reflexivity works in arts-based research. Being reflective as a practitioner-researcher was key to doing ethical and meaningful work (Finlay, 2002), especially in creative and community-based research.

Lived experience is shaped by environmental factors and engagement with others. When reflecting on a lived experience, insights gained through probing with arts-based activities may question current views and circumstances that could lead to an improved lived experience. Lived experience and identity of the self and positionality in terms of others are closely linked and could therefore provide opportunities to develop a future identity.

### **6.3.2 Space (Theme 2)**

Establishing safe spaces with NEET youth and substance users during the COVID-19 pandemic was essential to allow them to share their lived experiences. Space is also part of a larger environment, in which the influences of the phenomenon, in this case, unemployment and drug addiction, directly impact the lived experience of the person.

The CARER observed different creative skills and integrated these views to co-create new knowledge, similar to the findings of Phillips *et al.* (2022). Body and mind represent the integration of cognition and emotion as it happens within a particular situation. Sometimes the reality of a situation may require a change in planning and preparation, which means that the facilitator of such sessions needs to continuously consider participation and responses to be able to adapt methods or teaching style as needed (Kristensen, 2004). He refers to the creative processes of the Wallas model to consider embodied cognition and creativity as value creation processes, scaffolding, imagination processes, and materialisation processes, as experienced by the CARER in this study.

Space with a physical, virtual, or symbolic form influences creativity and the experiences of its occupants. Confined spaces enable or constrain the lived experiences of participants' ability to be creative. A space is situated in a particular context, which also influences the complex creative processes where body and mind are integrated for an embodied experience. In addition, a space is also part of a larger space, for example, a room in a rehabilitation centre and in a compromised context, or an online space within the global space of the pandemic. An important consideration for making, teaching, or researching art is the contribution of the space to compromised well-being.

Even when they were new or difficult, NEET youth enjoyed drawing to experience something new, even when it was their first exposure to using drawing to express themselves. The process was not just about the final artwork but more about trying something new online, facing challenges, and discovering personal capabilities and limitations. As P31 shared, "Very challenging and making me see my strengths and weaknesses", showing that the struggle turned into a tool for reflection. Similarly, P28 said, "It was a little bit challenging". A few participants articulated that it was difficult to find drawing materials in their immediate area. Reflective creativity established that creative challenge encouraged introspection, supporting the findings of Malchiodi (2007) and McNiff (2004).

The physical art space worked well for a small group and had enough room for the full-size body maps of the substance users. It also followed relaxed COVID-19 rules and allowed for safe distancing. Focus groups are effective in qualitative data collection, allowing for flexibility, richness in data, and different advantages in collecting data, as suggested by Gundumogula and Gundumogula (2020).

The CARER remained involved in spite of issues such as restricted access to art supplies, supported by overcoming obstacles, giving one a sense of accomplishment. The art space complied with COVID-19 regulations and provided a secure and nurturing environment. This art space has become my safe place for my own self-study, like a snug nest where the CARER feels secure enough to explore her deepest thoughts. What was really important was that this same space gave the participants the same feeling of safety when the space also became their "nest", where they, once trust was established, openly shared their experiences. The metaphor of the "nest" introduced a conceptual framework explaining how creativity and safety could exist in the study. It showed how safe spaces encouraged empathy and open conversation under challenging situations (Ware, 2022). A secure setting supported emotional safety and expression, which was essential in trauma-informed care (Herman, 1992; Hopper *et al.*, 2010). Creative activities helped vulnerable participants manage trauma and grow stronger. This confirms that creativity could bring challenges and joy, leading to personal

growth and change. Although NEET youth articulated that it was hard to get materials, it inspired new ways to create safe online spaces during COVID-19.

In addition, the teacher shared innovative, creative skills and created a space where participants could talk, reflect, and learn together. Social connections were shaped by time and place, as articulated by Ellis *et al.* (2011). Edwards (2021) highlights the importance of caring for oneself, similar to what Malchiodi (2018) say that creativity helps participants share their experiences and find their voice.

A safe space is vital for exploring one's lived experiences, shaped by the nuances of a particular situation. Such spaces for teaching creative processes can be physical, where art is made; cognitive, where ideas and self-expression take form; intellectual, where new knowledge is gained; emotional, where individuals feel secure enough to explore and take risks; or virtual, where participation is possible from afar. Each exists within a unique moment and setting, making it deeply tied to its context.

### **6.3.3 CARER (Theme 3)**

Creative arts research has unique qualities that need to be understood regarding how art was practised and how knowledge is created (Earnshaw *et al.*, 2020). Creating spaces that recognise personal experience, shared creation, and expression was essential. The authors explained that facilitation in the arts needs to be understood as both an evolving process and a way of knowing (Mers *et al.*, 2025).

My new role grew to include becoming a researcher, while still being an artist first and a teacher second. I transitioned from being just an artist (a) to an artist-teacher (a-t) and ultimately to an artist-researcher-teacher (CARER). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasise the importance of researcher positionality in qualitative inquiry, encouraging the cultivation of an insider perspective to share in the experiences of vulnerable individuals. While I agreed with this principle, my work with NEET youth in an online environment often left me feeling more like an outsider, constrained in the support I could offer during the drawing activities. Even so, the study was grounded in qualitative and participatory values that embraced co-participation, which ultimately guided its design and implementation.

As an artist, I found inspiration in visuals and used the metaphor of a nest to show a safe space where growth happened through experience and reflection. Each egg in the nest represented one of my roles. I portrayed the hatching process as I grew as a researcher, with my supervisors as the incubators helping me develop. The metaphor showed how my artistic thinking shaped my understanding, identity, and way of learning. My journey followed a visual path of identity development through practice, reflection, and teaching. It symbolised creative growth through self-awareness and change. Metaphors helped deepen my reflexivity as a



researcher, supported by past studies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). The nest and eggs metaphor grew naturally from my art practice and reflected innovation and authenticity. It highlighted how creative methods assisted me in better understanding knowledge and supported earlier work on my ART identity and the value of reflexivity.

The study showed that the CARER's identity grew through arts-based approaches, which often resided in blended personal and professional roles, as supported by Knowles and Cole (2008) and Rolling (2010). My creative work was strengthened through the research process, which enhanced my artistic identity as an artist and researcher.

A key part of the study was reflecting on the CARER's artistic identity, which became a creative framework to develop a research identity. The nest, eggs, and incubators metaphor worked as a reflection method, research, and a methodological tool for other arts-based researchers. This metaphor gave a clear visual structure to show growth, support, and identity development. The supportive role of supervision was shown as "incubation," highlighting mentorship. The study visually represented research beyond words and embodied how the researcher's identity changed through creative practice.

#### **6.3.4 Reflections (Theme 4)**

Even though a few participants used their reflection journals, most participants found capturing reflections challenging. *"As a person we occasionally reflect on our lives. As such we miss something about ourselves. The reflection journal made me see a lot about myself, as I reflected on my life"* [P36]. Participant 31 expressed, *"I will be very happy as I can talk out my dream and maybe my doors will be open"*, which assisted with emotional well-being, and was aspirational, inspiring.

Reflection journaling helped uncover deep emotional and cognitive understanding beyond everyday thinking. However, Participant 51 said, *"That was the hardest part for me,"* showing that reflection was not easy. As a novice researcher, the CARER initially found scientific reflection difficult. However, integrating artistic practices like drawing and imagery alongside written work enhanced the reflective process. This supports the view in qualitative research that journaling serves as a valuable tool for fostering self-awareness and critical thinking (Moon, 2006; Boud *et al.*, 1985). Reflection journals matched the study's findings, as reflection revealed hidden aspects of self-understanding and showed reflexivity as a process (Faulkner *et al.*, 2016).

Similar to what was indicated in prior research, the CARER noticed patterns, challenges, and insights from the research experience through regular journaling, which helped develop a deeper analysis (Lamb, 2013; Makaiau *et al.*, 2015). Journaling helped improve practice and

allowed sharing insights with others. The interpretation of data and social settings was shaped through continuous reflexivity (Harasym *et al.*, 2024).

In this study, the CARER used reflective documentation to observe, teach, and respond to participants' reactions, while also supporting their self-awareness. Reflection journals provided a structured space to record insights and evaluate biases, and specific activities allowed participants to share and reflect on their creative experiences (Faulkner *et al.*, 2016; Lamb, 2013; Makaiau *et al.*, 2015). The journal method and the arts-based research presented different understandings of reflexivity that emerged.

Exploring visual expression through creativity enhanced relationships with participants and shaped how individual experiences influenced their reflective practices. As an artist, I am fascinated by round-shaped, bristle-like, wooden, discarded, banal, found objects, which I always collect. My attraction to circular artefacts has always been reflective and is my preferred mode of expression. The mysteriousness of the collected items sparked artistic ideas that contributed to new artistic life. Laganà (2019) suggests that Jung believed that the circle has always been a mysterious shape that fascinated artists who used it uniquely and symbolically. The CARER used circles to represent the self, reflecting my conscious and unconscious identity. The shape became a symbol of wholeness, eternity, and mystery. In addition, Visse *et al.* (2019) explain that in ABR the researcher, in this case, the CARER, needs to embrace the unknown and be fully present in both the creative process and the mystery of exploration. The manner and mode of reflection cannot be prescribed because they are informed by a person's cognitive and mental processes.

The study used a mixed-method approach that combined art-making with observation and reflection to explore how autoethnography and artistic research worked together (Daly, 2021). The CARER's choices and knowledge in visual learning added empathy to the facilitation process, especially in understanding participants' emotional experiences. Adams *et al.* (2015) described six key parts of autoethnography, including personal voice, cultural critique, reflexivity, and lived experience. This approach was central to the study as a tool for reflection, documentation, and artistic insight (MacLeod & Holdridge, 2006; Adams *et al.*, 2015). Guyotte *et al.* (2018) concur with other authors, demonstrating how autoethnography facilitates the emergence of the self within creative arts practice. This study, informed by the above perspectives, supports the value of using art as a means to understand oneself and others.

This theme highlighted that embodied reflection was emotional and transformative. The CARER and participants found body mapping difficult, tiring, and emotional. It made them reflect on memories and feelings through physical expression. Strong emotional reactions were evoked by the arts-based body mapping process (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2012; Mitchell *et al.*,

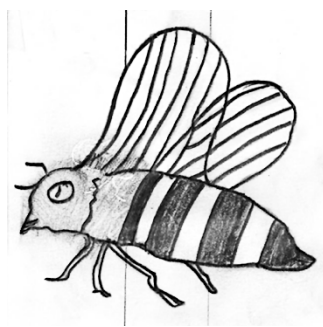
2011). One participant said that he “*found focus, calmness, clearer thinking, and new creative strength through body mapping.*” substance-dependant participants also found meaning through journaling to assist them during the body mapping process. Reflection helped turn an experience into understanding and action, requiring time, care, and trust, consistent with ethical practices supporting the view of Surmiak *et al.* (2022).

The CARER’s journey deepened the understanding of shared reflection. By collecting found objects and using autoethnography, the CARER linked personal memory to research. The CARER’s autoethnographic reflection on sustainable art-making helped link personal memories and identity to the research process, like collecting found objects. The method supported a creative working method that connected the CARER’s artistic practice with academic research.

Participants and the CARER reflected on creative tasks that challenged the norm rooted in artistic development and aesthetics (Mers, *et al.*, 2025). They used dreams, imagination, and symbols to express more profound meaning. The drawing of a ‘lollie’, the glass pipe, stood out, it was marked with a big red backward “L”. This symbol captured his past struggle with drugs. Alongside it, Changes Scott wrote the acronym “RAC,” which stands for “Recovery at the Crossroads”, as a strong message of his commitment to change. Symbols had additional levels of inherent meaning understood as interchangeable and metaphorical, holding enduring importance and value. The CARER believed these symbols added richness and helped connect art to real life (Laganà, 2019).

The use of rich visual tools and artistic approaches conveyed the creative experience of facilitation. The CARER had to switch between different roles during this process, which was a crucial component of the innovative, creative research methodology. It encouraged collaborative reflection on both creative development and the underlying social processes.

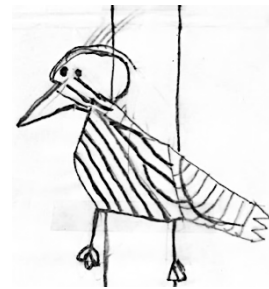
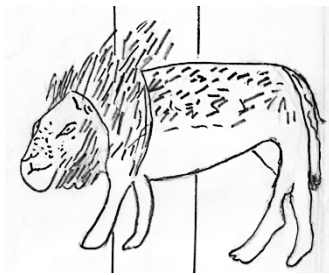
In focus groups, substance users used simple visual and metaphorical animal symbols to share their positive thoughts for easier expression and understanding, as noted by Fort (2022) and Nind and Vinha (2016). Liggett (2020) indicates that one neglected area of arts-based research is the identification of animals and objects as metaphors. Mabra drew a lion as a metaphor to represent bravery and leadership, qualities he hopes to show as he leads his family after leaving rehab, using his new skills to support them. These simple metaphors helped make complex feelings easier to express and understand (Ware, 2022).



### The Bee

The most important that a bee can make us honey and it bite when you are insulting it. It also looks like an helicopter flying in the sky.

My animal is a bird that can time travel.



### LION

- Lion Because it is a king of the jungle
- It always protect the family
- It doesn't eat everything
- It has to hunt and lose the process on hunting
- When ever it get the food it always bring to the family
- The lion teach or learn the young once time to hunt while they are young

### Jaguar

- Shush a crying baby
- Brighten up a dull day
- Fly as fast as lightning

### Bird

#### Cockatiel

Whistle & Sing  
 Jaw Piereniet  
 Jaw Piereniet staan still.  
 Goeie more my vray  
 Daar is seentjie vir jou  
 Goeie more my man  
 Daar is koffie in die Pan

Figure 6-2: Reflection examples

Through arts-based metaphors, participants found complex ideas easier to talk about, which helped build shared meaning. Ware (2022) suggests that there is limited research on specifically exploring how metaphors within arts processes and artefacts help support changes in personal understanding, or how the arts assist vulnerable individuals in this way. They supported empathy and helped substance users understand each other. The use of metaphors created through arts processes and artefacts allowed for the safe exploration of sensitive topics, encouraged deep engagement and reflection, and supported lasting changes in how conflict was understood and responded to, leading to supportive attitudes and behaviours. ABR encouraged deep thinking by focusing on reflection, perception, and experience. At its core, ABR asks researchers to pay close attention to the activity or experience and stay open to what the artwork revealed (Visse *et al.*, 2019).

The CARER used body mapping as an arts-based research method to explore the complex experiences of people with a substance use disorder (Macken *et al.*, 2021). ABR responded well to the CARER, dealing with unexpected changes by trusting the creative process (McNiff, 2008; Visse *et al.*, 2019). Writing in reflective journals proved to be a good resource for the final report in a research study to capture observations and reflections (Yin, 2011). In addition, participants reflected on their learning experiences, identified challenges, and developed future improvement plans, which guided their body map process (Baker, 2021).

The CARER used visual tools and creative methods to guide the workshops. The CARER moved between different roles during the process, which was an essential part of the innovative research. Creative processes aided the CARER and the participants in reflecting on their artwork and the social issues they explored. ABR used this reflection to build a more profound understanding through art and lived experience (Visse *et al.*, 2019). Body mapping explored the lives of people recovering from substance dependence (Macken *et al.*, 2021) and assisted the CARER in dealing with unexpected challenges by trusting the creative process (McNiff, 2008; Visse *et al.*, 2019).

Reflexive practice is a multi-layered meaning-making situational process that challenges one's understanding of what is current and what is possible; how to adjust or adapt, and why this is necessary. Reflection is a deeply personal process that cannot be prescribed, as it draws on an individual's unique cognitive and mental processes. However, shared meaning-making becomes possible when two or more people engage in the exchange of reflections, allowing new insights to emerge through dialogue. These shared insights may influence each person's individual reflection, but only to the extent that they are internalised and integrated into one's own thinking.

### **6.3.5 Creativity (Theme 5)**

Using creativity as a catalyst, my spontaneous ideas during (a-r-t) roles led to lasting ways of guiding workshops that helped participants foster their creativity and build trust. This approach matched how artists changed their practices to combine traditional face-to-face methods with digital tools during COVID-19 (Cutcliffe *et al.* 2024; Stephenson *et al.*, 2022). A/R/Tography offered a distinct practice by integrating the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher (Springgay,*et al.*, 2005; Ibáñez, 2015). Beagle (2021) and Berman (2017) suggest that arts-based methods created learning experiences that included flowing, physical, intuitive, emotional, and symbolic ways of understanding.

In line with Lopes and Machado (2023), incorporating sustainable artistic techniques and body mapping into the A/R/Tography framework improved my artistic practice, increased my level of research engagement, and improved my teaching strategies. The combination of creative

processes can create new avenues for research, self-expression, and innovation in education (Samaniego *et al.*, 2024). During data collection, the value of teaching sustainable creative skills and body mapping became clear to the CARER from the perspectives of the participants (Heinrichs, 2021). In this study, artistic methods for meaning making and comprehension were communicated through expressive and creative data (Berman, 2017).

By taking part in arts-based activities, NEET youth and substance users had a chance to express themselves, be creative, and grow personally, reducing stress, which supported their overall development and well-being (Ennis & Tonkin, 2018; Maina *et al.*, 2022). Positive outcomes were crucial for mutual well-being, while sustainable creative interventions contributed to improved welfare through shared purpose and meaning. Through this process, creativity became a tool for artistic expression, empowering vulnerable individuals to nurture their creative skills, explore potential opportunities, and have hope for a better future.

Bamber (2013) indicates that non-formal teaching methods that focus on creativity help underserved and compromised individuals to become more adaptable to life changes. Past research showed how creative innovation helped improve well-being, emotional expression, and engagement, especially for vulnerable groups. The creative process used different ways of thinking and doing, where imagination, ideas, feelings, actions, and materials all worked together and supported each other (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2013).

People recovering from substance use expressed their life experiences creatively using their cultural background on their maps. They regained their identities by adding cultural symbols to their body maps, showing how art contributes to communicating better towards healing. Near his mouth, *David 2* drew a bottle of beer to symbolise his past struggles with addiction. Over it, he placed a red circle with a white line through it—a strong visual statement of his decision to reject alcohol abuse. Following Rose's visual analysis ideas (Gastaldo *et al.*, 2012), participants chose and arranged images, symbols, and words to create an artwork of their thoughts and experiences on their body maps (Boden & Eatough, 2014). This method helped the CARER gain new perspectives, find hidden meanings, and explored difficult ideas in a clear and easy way (Dutton *et al.*, 2019).

To handle complex challenges, the CARER used ABR and A/R/Tography creativity as a strategic tool to gain insights (Haselwanter & Soila-Wadman, 2014). Likewise, the creative process encouraged participants to feel empowered by allowing them to imagine self-exploration, expression, and discover their abilities (Holdren, 2017). ABR through the lens of A/R/Tography supported the CARER's findings, which disclosed that creative methods helped reduce resistance among substance users and encouraged them to express themselves. My

research showed that building trust took time and required sensitivity, allowing creativity to reveal vulnerability.

Creativity was central to this shift and unlocked opportunities for creativity-focused pedagogy and presented the CARER with novel ways to think about social change to take risks and step into the unknown (Beagle, 2021; Berman, 2017). Creativity was appreciated for its innate ability to empower participants, which encouraged a sense of agency and the ability to foster imagination, increasing self-determination (Vanada, 2013).

From the CARER's (artist) perspective, the study provided a framework for exploring experiences and enabling creative expression. This process also allowed the artist to explore hope and construct meaning during difficult times, navigating the complexities of practice in present contexts (Stephenson *et al.*, 2022). Creating artistic impressions through drawing, sustainable creative techniques, and body mapping became methods for unravelling complex human experiences and capturing diverse narratives (Irwin & Springgay, 2017). In addition, contributions included the fact that creativity was used as a technique for establishing trust, emotional safety, and connection in addition to self-expression.

Furthermore, a topic that may not have been discussed in recent literature is how creative identity and research are impacted by personal symbols, such as the circular form (Islam, 2021). These symbols highlighted the circle's significance in the development of both the individual and identity, and were inspired by transformative experiences (Lagana, 2019). Despite these examples, there is a noticeable gap in recent literature specifically addressing how personal symbolism, like circular forms, influences research methodologies and the development of artistic identity. This suggests an opportunity for further exploration into how such symbols shape and reflect the identities of researchers and artists alike.

### **6.3.6 Participation (Theme 6)**

The study observed the ethical, cultural, and legal effects of working with vulnerable communities and individuals on art projects (Janssen *et al.*, 2014) to ensure the CARER did more than create art together. Van der Vaart (2022) warns that arts projects alone cannot change the situations of underserved and compromised participants unless their outcomes are checked for long-term impact, which was not the scope of the study. Ethical research was based on a promise to keep participants safe and protect their rights. To do this, the CARER's autoethnography approach involved careful thought about relationships and responsibilities. Expectations were continuously managed.

Participation in arts skill development has been shown to improve well-being, creativity, and personal growth. Initiatives have been acknowledged for their beneficial and long-lasting effects on vulnerable individuals and groups, similar to the views of Newman *et al.* (2003) and

Melcher (2014). Although the study did not provide for a long-term impact, the positive responses of the participants already indicate the potential of creative processes to improve their sense of self. This supports the view of McCarthy *et al.* (2004) that many participants appreciate the arts for their meaningful experiences, rather than just for measurable outcomes.

Switzer *et al.* (2024) suggest that many community-based practitioners struggle to build and maintain partnerships, relationships, or projects during the COVID-19 pandemic because of disruption, loss, and uncertainty. They suggest the following ethics guidelines (i) care and relationships, (ii) being open and responsible, and (iii) giving fair access to all. A precautionary approach saw the pandemic as a risk to ethics, increasing harm, and lowering ethical standards. Some researchers who had planned in-person work delayed their research until after the pandemic (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022). The CARER had to reconsider the ethics of the study, taking into account the impact of the pandemic since participants were severely negatively impacted by the pandemic and lockdown restrictions that required a completely new way of interaction. Even though the pandemic disrupted the research and people's lives, researchers had to manage the situation without clear ethical guidance. The CARER adapted the online workshop process to the new problem while trying to stay ethical, similar to Switzer *et al.* (2024). Likewise, Mers *et al.* (2025) emphasise that clear benefits are possible when reflecting facilitation through the lens of ethics, agency, vulnerability, joy, and community. The study contributed to how the CARER employed ethical flexibility to balance research goals with the community's and individuals' needs.

Participation was not anonymous. Because users' identities, photos, artworks, and voices were automatically visible, complete anonymity was challenging to achieve. Participants' names were kept in arts-based research to enhance cultural memory and genuinely retain their stories, but participant privacy was impacted by the requirement to restrict who could participate. It seems that long-term, respectful relationships are key to building trust and ensuring the work remains culturally relevant.

The research stayed authentic by including my personal experience, which meant the CARER naturally became part of the research journey. Researchers found new ways to work with participants, support their voices, and adjust the research to meet their needs, guided by social ethics. Researchers became more creative during the pandemic and saw new opportunities, which led to more flexible and innovative approaches. ABR studies often use new methods that do not align with traditional ethics guidelines, which ethics committees found challenging. Because ABR is flexible and evolving, researchers had to make ethical decisions in the moment and be careful about sharing personal information later on (Harasym *et al.*, 2024).



The theme showed that face-to-face engagement was essential in arts-based and qualitative research. Participants preferred in-person interaction because they felt they could have direct access to learning, which gave better emotional support, especially for those without access to digital devices. COVID-19 disruptions made it clear that in-person engagement was limited, but necessary for deep creative knowledge. My findings confirmed that trust and creative support were stronger when people were physically present.

My passion for creativity and vulnerable community education showed how personal values supported ethical practice and lasting research. As a CARER, I remained flexible and responsive, which added to academic conversations about the role and position of the researcher. My experience confirmed what scholars in qualitative research have verbalised about the importance of reflexivity and adaptability in complex situations (Tracy, 2010).

In addition, community-based arts brought clear benefits, including enhanced well-being, stronger communication, and more confidence for both individuals and groups (Janssen *et al.*, 2014). Knowing the value of practical research guided my actions so that participants felt supported and empowered (Martikainen, 2019). The skill of sustainable bookbinding was imparted to the substance use group by a professional handmade bookbinder. All the participants reported their enjoyment and were happy to acquire the skill for possible future self-sustenance. During the session, the CARER observed how they focused and confidently participated in the teaching and learning.

The autoethnographic component of this study enabled a critical interrogation of the CARER's intersecting roles as artist, teacher, and researcher in facilitating meaningful participation in creative sessions. Such participation was advanced through a flexible, research-informed pedagogy that leveraged creative processes to elicit artistic expression and illuminate self-other dynamics within the specific context. Engagement strategies were tailored to the diverse circumstances and experiential backgrounds of participants, recognising that the complexity of their lived realities necessitated a multi-faceted, context-sensitive approach.

#### **6.3.7 Challenges (Theme 7)**

The CARER operated in unpredictable settings, with NEET youth participants in underserved and socio-economically deprived environments, in an online creative drawing activity during COVID, and substance users in compromised contexts. Participants mentioned a lack of resources and support as one reason why COVID-19 lockdowns had negative effects on creative projects. Clear rules were needed before commencing the online creative activity. Examples of technological challenges include: "I still don't have data am only using WhatsApp data and I really want to participate" [P10]. "I withdraw Bcz u no longer providing us with data to participate" [P53]. Several challenges, such as poor internet access, high data costs for

using selected social media platforms, and the need to manage access, affected participant anonymity. Not having data or devices made it hard for some to join online workshops, showing tech challenges. These were technical issues and signs of deeper contextual problems in the participants' daily lives.

When creative processes result in emotional or negative responses, activities may need to be adapted to focus on positive memories. Therapists were invited to view the body maps and noted that most participants entering rehabilitation carried deep, unresolved trauma. They noted that many emotions were not released during regular therapy. One therapist said the body maps revealed insights that had not surfaced before. Toward the end of the sessions, fatigue set in, but the Centre's therapist used targeted interventions to re-engage participants. Personal topics could be sensitive, and creating or thinking about visual materials could be emotionally draining, as noted by Martikainen (2019a).

In complex research settings, researchers must pay close attention to ethics. The CARER's ethical awareness was crucial for holding space, re-engaging participants, and adjusting flexibly to different levels of participation. Moral views reinforced that arts-based research had to remain malleable, holistic, and focused on the well-being of participants.

Institutional pressures created a stressful setting that made it harder for the CARER to observe and fully connect with participants during the body mapping. Additional challenges included a lack of support, keeping an eye on using and storing sharp tools and cleaning chemicals, and handling different emotional responses. It was important for researchers to have support systems to assist in these complex situations.

The research uncovered that emotional release, such as after yoga, helped restart creative involvement and gave new insight into body-based activities, while NEET youth in digital settings participated admirably. It also revealed that online engagement was emotionally sensitive and needed ethical awareness, care, and constant support from the facilitator.

When participants dropped out after losing access to data, it showed that digital access was an ethical responsibility in long-term participatory work. The CARER supported NEET youth online, offering emotional care even in sporadic online spaces. Moral thinking, body map grounding, and sustainable creative techniques brought a new, multi-layered approach to online and in-person arts-based research. The findings highlighted the importance of ethical, emotional, social, and institutional flexibility, showing the complex role of arts-based researchers in digital and rehabilitation environments.

### **6.3.8 Discussion conclusion**

Data collection and analysis followed a phased approach. The lived experience theme revealed how reflexive practices and embodied visual expression deepened the progress of

the CARER and participants. Through individual and group sustainable artistic interaction, innovative techniques such as life-sized body mapping gave participants fresh perspectives and facilitated meaning-making. In arts-based research, reflexivity has become increasingly important from an ethical standpoint, particularly in relation to trauma, positionality, and identity.

The metaphor of the “nest” encapsulated the idea of a safe space, representing safety, growth, and creative transformation. Online and in-person facilitation promoted emotional openness, self-reflection, and autonomy in this secure setting. Exploration of the researcher’s positionality was made possible by creative metaphor and visual thinking, while “nestling” provided a framework for identity creation and mentoring. The reflection on the metaphor of nests, eggs, and incubators influenced creative inspiration and methods of knowing, being, and becoming.

Embodied reflexivity was emotionally challenging, as it turned lived experiences into meaning through journaling, metaphors, and symbols. Creative activities helped with memory, vulnerability, and ethical reflection, showing that thinking deeply about experiences was necessary in the research.

The study showed how creativity evolved into a valuable and empowering tool for overcoming challenges, self-expression, and fostering trust. Through symbolic shapes like the circle, which strengthened the (a-r-ts) creative and personal identity, participants connected, grew, and created agency through arts-based research and A/R/Tography.

Trust, concern, and adaptability were key components of participation, particularly during COVID-19 and when some participants were unable to participate online. Face-to-face interaction stayed remained for building genuine commitment. Despite institutional and emotional obstacles, the CARER adapted with dedication. Creative energy was reestablished by supportive activities like yoga, demonstrating the value of employing diverse, adaptable, and ethical methods in challenging research environments.

## **6.4 Quality of the research**

Next, the quality of the research is considered for the three research strategies used.

### **6.4.1 Quality of the interpretive phenomenological analysis Strategy**

The study used an interpretive phenomenological approach to understand how lived experiences of NEET youth and men in substance abuse rehabilitation affected their daily lives under challenging conditions. Ware (2023) indicates that phenomenological analysis aims to comprehend human experience from the viewpoint of individuals experiencing a certain phenomenon. Instead of observing through the eyes of an outside researcher, the study focused on how individuals in underserved and compromised settings felt and

interpreted events, attempting to understand thought processes and lived realities from within. NEET youth spoke about how their surroundings shaped their identity and sense of belonging during COVID-19 and how arts-based online sustainable creative participation made them feel good about themselves. At the same time, substance users in rehabilitation reflected how addiction and recovery through arts-based metaphors in body mapping influenced how they saw themselves.

This study focused on two target groups whose sense of safety was shaped by a specific phenomenon. NEET youth lived in the same geographical area to allow exploration of shared contextual factors. The phenomenon of the first group included unemployed youth (NEET) aged 18 to 35, and the phenomenon of the second group comprised individuals in rehabilitation for substance dependency. Most of the participants were also unemployed due to their substance addiction. Participants were chosen based on shared experiences, not on race or gender, except in the rehab group, which included only men. In both cases, the contexts were described to get a situated sense of the participants' lived experiences. The context descriptions highlight the factors of a compromised environment and its impact on the study to ground the findings. The two phenomena, namely unemployment and drug addiction, were described to show how the participants' experience their life realities within a compromised context. In addition, details of the two target groups are provided to explain how the target groups were identified and recruited. Coherent descriptions of the planning, execution, and reflection within the research were provided to support the findings (Shinebourne, 2011).

The data were collected using appropriate instruments to stimulate an open and honest reflection on the participants' lived experiences. Using the diverse data sources, a divergent process resulted in deriving suitable codes. Thereafter, the focus shifted to a convergence of the different themes from the three strategies to conclude with five overall combined themes. Each combined theme was then linked back to the different strategies to ensure that its meaning was still reflected by the theme descriptions and associated quotations. Excerpts of the code sheets from the code book were included to support the coding process by making it more visible (Goldman, 2006; Nizza et al., 2021).

Creative methods such as body mapping, drawing, WhatsApp messages, and journaling helped participants express feelings that were hard to put into words. These methods gave insight into their inner struggles and how they made sense of their lives (Nizza *et al.*, 2021; Shinebourne, 2011). The process was collaborative, with the researcher and participants creating meaning based on their shared experiences (Kelly, 2014). This aspect is included in the many descriptions of the activities, responses, and reflections reporting on the research.

Despite some ethical and practical challenges, the study showed similarities and differences in how participants understood their lives. The creative processes helped reveal lived experiences not surfaced in traditional research, offering comprehensive insights into their realities (Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

Body mapping as a creative process assisted substance users in exploring their experiences with drawings, symbols, and words. This process gave insight into how they understood themselves in connection to their life situations, offered hope, built their confidence, and supported healing.

The study focused on how participants made sense of their experiences through their bodies, emotions, and actions. Online and face-to-face arts-based methods such as drawing, innovative printmaking techniques, and sustainable creative processes allowed participants to express and reflect on inner states, sharing feelings and knowledge creation (Koopman *et al.*, 2020).

Interpretive phenomenology is about the researcher gaining insight into how people make sense of their lived realities in specific situations. In this study, meaning-making was not only verbal but also embodied. Through reflective diaries, dialogue, and visual expression, participants explored how sustainable creative activities shaped their sense of safety, self-worth, and belonging. Embodied understanding was central to capturing the full intensity of their lived experiences (Maraldi *et al.*, 2020; Ellis *et al.*, 2011).

#### **6.4.2 Quality of the arts-based research strategy**

It is important to consider the quality of ABR for both the research and art aspects of the study to determine its value according to the GABRA meta-framework (Gerber *et al.*, 2020; Lafrenière & Cox 2013). The quality is considered in the following areas:

- 1) To determine if the reporting and the research design are scientifically sound. This was achieved by identifying a research gap in the knowledge base substantiated by current research, described in the research problem statement. The research aim was based on addressing the identified gap. It was important to align the research problem, aim, and questions, and to choose a research design that is aligned with the nature of the study to obtain data and analysis to respond to the research questions? Although Arts-based research is a suitable strategy for studying research projects based on the arts, two additional research strategies, namely interpretive phenomenology and autoethnography, were also employed in this study to strengthen the scientific aspect.
- 2) In this study, the ideas, design, and findings are shared through two intertwined languages—scientific writing and artistic expression. Each medium, whether words as text or images, tells the same story in its own way, offering different entry points for

understanding and connection. This confirms the preference for expression as something that represents a person's thought patterns.

In this study, ideas, design, and findings were communicated through two intertwined languages—scientific writing and artistic expression. While distinct in form, both textual and visual modes conveyed the same underlying meanings, offering complementary pathways for interpretation and engagement. This relationship demonstrated how expression, whether through words or images, functioned as a reflection of individual thought patterns, confirming that meaning is shaped not only by content but by the mode through which it is articulated.

- 3) The impact of dissemination currently only applies to the participants' reactions to their reflections and artworks, and not yet to the scientific audience for research publications, or as an exhibition of the artwork relating to the study. Based on the results and identified gaps, several potential publications have been identified, and they are being prepared in a parallel process. The impact of the research on the research participants is explained in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Although there is not yet evidence of a tangible impact of changes to the participants' lives, there is sufficient evidence of how they view themselves with some hope for a better future. Through the autoethnography study, the researcher, as artist and teacher, had the opportunity to develop a stand-alone chapter that describes her research journey and identity formation.

This study may be interesting to other ABR researchers, phenomenologists, and ethnographers, but also researchers interested in the intersection of science and art.

#### **6.4.3 Quality of the autoethnography research strategy**

The quality of the ethnography study is considered according to the following aspects suggested by Le Roux (2016) and Sparkes (2021):

- 1) Subjectivity: The CAREER made herself visible through narrative storytelling, complemented with artistic expressions, presented in a chronological account of experiences that shaped her growth—first as an artist, then as an arts teacher, and ultimately as an arts-based researcher. She engaged in critical self-reflection to remain true to her core identity as an artist, while exploring how the roles of artist, teacher, and researcher could complement and strengthen one another. With honesty and authenticity, she revealed her vulnerabilities and described how specific events influenced both her research journey and her relationships with others. Grounding her reflections in the concept of lived experience, she drew upon her artistic abilities to sustain her identity as a practicing artist. Symbolism played a central role in her self-

exploration, such as using the nest to signify a safe space. Her artistic expressions served as both a method of inquiry and a medium for deeper reflection. Even CARER, the acronym chosen to represent her new identity, allowed her to reflect on being a **C**reator as an **A**rtist; adopting **R**eflector as an important aspect of her arts, research, and teaching practices; exploring **E**thnography as a scientific approach to her study; and **R**evealer to explore latent skills in her teaching practices.

- 2) Self-reflexivity: The study looked at how introspection and artistic expression helped the researcher and participants grow in their ability to reflect on their life experiences. As an artist-teacher-researcher (a-r-t), the researcher supported vulnerable individual and group reflection (Anderson, 2006; Bishop, 2021; Méndez, 2013). Personal reflection (“auto”), cultural understanding (“ethno”), and meaningful narrative (“graphy”) were all combined in autoethnography (Adams & Herrmann, 2023). In the researcher’s emotional and reflective journey, the “auto” was evident. Reflections on academic life and interactions with NEET youth and men in recovery the “ethno” was most evident. Through the lens of A/R/Tography, the “graphy” developed using metaphor, word, and visuals (Springgay *et al.*, 2005; Herrmann, 2022). Positionality, ethics, and emotions were constantly considered.
- 3) Resonance: By being open and honest about the different life experiences, the reader can relate emotionally to the challenges experienced as well as connect to the experience of becoming a researcher. Other researchers in community-based research can relate to the challenges associated with conducting research in compromised contexts. Other PhD scholars may particularly relate to the challenges experienced in PhD studies.
- 4) Credibility: Since the metaphor of a “nest” represented vulnerability and growth, art and metaphor promoted the development of a deeper understanding (Koopman *et al.*, 2020; Williams, 2024). Self-reflection was encouraged by sustainable creative techniques, printmaking, and drawing. Creative flexibility was needed while collaborating with the groups in person and virtually. The study employed visual art to depict emotional and reflexive memories and drew on phenomenology to explore lived meaning (Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Pitard, 2016; Starr, 2014). Honest reflection and clear evidence backed up the conclusions.
- 5) Transparency, ethical reflexivity, and critical self-awareness were used in the study to answer the criticism that autoethnography is too subjective or emotional (Bishop, 2021; Chang, 2016; Edwards, 2021; Lapadat, 2017; Méndez, 2013; Wall, 2006). The researcher adhered to Sparkes’s (2021) standards for quality research.

- 6) Contribution: Although autoethnography has been criticised for being overly subjective or emotional (Chang, 2016; Lapadat, 2017; Méndez, 2013), the study addressed this through transparency, ethical reflexivity, and critical self-awareness (Bishop, 2021; Edwards, 2021; Wall, 2006). The researcher followed Sparkes' (2021) quality criteria. The work advanced academic knowledge in arts-based research and provided insightful information for others (Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Le Roux, 2016; Sparkes, 2021). This study contributes new knowledge to the body of knowledge on understanding and reflecting on *in situ* lived experience and expressing it as experienced by a researcher, with meaningful narratives combined with artistic expressions to provide a multi-layered level of understanding. Methodologically, the autoethnography chapter is an example of how lived experience can be investigated using arts-based methods. The reflected description of the transition in the researcher's identity and positionality could be useful for other novice researchers. Practically, the autoethnography chapter provides an example outline of reporting on autoethnography.

### **6.5 CARER positioning and identity**

Transitioning into the role of a researcher was not easy, especially after not receiving support from my department and having to deal with hurtful comments. This deeply affected my motivation to pursue my doctoral studies. I was already confident in my artist identity being a recognised artist, and also as an arts teacher, a role that I found to be rewarding based on my students' feedback and my own sense of satisfaction. Becoming a researcher was challenging because the rigour of science — with its structured, systematic, and analytical approaches — was difficult to merge with my creative ways of generating new understandings through exploration, intuition, and the use of symbols and metaphors. Over time, I familiarised myself with the research process through extensive academic reading and writing, which helped build my confidence. I also acknowledged my preference for expressing insights artistically. This enabled me to integrate artistic representations of research concepts with scientific writing, offering two complementary interpretations of the same idea. Nevertheless, meeting the requirements of becoming a researcher meant mastering formal research processes to contribute novel and significant knowledge to the field.

Insider and outsider roles in research are widely discussed across fields like sociology, education, psychology, multiculturalism, and political science (Goode, 2023; Merriam *et al.*, 2001; Stroup & Zempi, 2016). Rather than considering one role outshining another, the CARER explored the advantages and limits of being an insider for easier access, deeper understanding, and stronger relationships and reflected on concerns about bias and becoming too involved (Mercer, 2007). It was recognised that researchers rarely stayed fully inside or outside but moved between these roles as co-participants; the CARER accomplished this



during online creative teaching with NEET youth and in-person facilitation with substance users in rehabilitation (Kelly, 2014).

These discussions highlighted important methodological and ethical issues, especially how the CARER's identity transitions influence positionality in the research process (Holmes, 2021). Reflexivity helped the CARER in a researcher role to manage the discomfort and challenges of shifting roles (Hamdan, 2010). These insider and outsider positions also brought practical and conceptual challenges (Porisky & Glas, 2022). The CARER already found being an insider during the online creative teaching challenging because it was difficult to provide practical support. During face-to-face facilitation with substance users, shifting between insider and outsider roles was also challenging. Many insights emerged from this experience, which was explored in the thematic discussion. My positionality was influenced by the relationships I formed with the participants, which required the need to first have a safe space and then form trusting relationships. Teaching creative processes is much more than teaching skills, since it depends on the participant's unique circumstances that will influence their participation and ability to gain from the activities.

Being an insider helped researchers ask meaningful questions (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). Still, Adriansen and Madsen (2009) articulated that being an insider also risked losing objectivity if researchers got too close to the group they studied. In the ART's experience, objectivity was affected due to the challenging support circumstances that negatively impacted research observation.

## **6.6 Ethical dilemmas**

This study faced ethical challenges due to its participatory, creative, and autoethnographic nature, which were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the original ethics approval, ethical issues required flexible, ongoing responses in context (Lyle *et al.*, 2023; Orb & Eisenhauer, 2000). Inflexible protocols often limited meaningful engagement, making it hard to balance formal rules with moral judgement (Banks *et al.*, 2013; Cornbleet, 2003; Ross). Doing research during the pandemic disrupted data collection and exposed gaps in ethics review systems (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022). While some paused research, the CARER had to adapt quickly with some guidance (Aven, 2023), leaving some novice researchers especially uncertain (Surmiak *et al.*, 2022). Emotional strain on the CARER and participants made ethical care essential (Ellis, 2007; Surmiak *et al.*, 2022).

Autoethnography raised concerns around privacy, emotional safety, and the ethical use of personal stories (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Gatekeepers sometimes restricted participation, even when individuals wanted to be involved, creating tension between protection and autonomy (Alexander *et al.*, 2018). The substance users wrote both their full names and pseudonyms on

their body maps and gave consent for their artworks, including their names, to be published. Generic ethical guidelines proved inadequate, as care had to be tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable groups (Blanchard, 2017; Bracken-Roche *et al.*, 2016; WHO, 2011;).

The CARER concealed their names in line with ethical guidelines to protect the participants, even though the participants wished otherwise. A study showed that participants sometimes rejected pseudonyms and asked for their real names to be used, such as activists who said anonymity stole their identity and history. However, researchers needed extra ethics approval before publishing (Mukungu, 2017). In addition, Bos's (2020) ethics guidelines stated that researchers had to hide information that might harm participants, even if participants had initially agreed or wanted their names used, especially concerning reputation, community standing, or jobs.

Arts-based methods also posed challenges, as creative outputs and visual materials sometimes triggered emotional distress (Boydell *et al.*, 2012; Martikainen, 2019). Pilot workshops revealed emotional burdens, requiring me as CARER to support and adapt methods sensitively. The safety provided by arts-based metaphors, especially visual ones, created spaces for dialogue without causing shame. Participants could distance themselves from their usual attitudes and behaviours and explore new alternatives (Ware, 2022). Researchers had to navigate tensions between “doing no harm” and respecting confidentiality, relying on principle-based reasoning and shared decision-making with participants (Espedal *et al.*, 2023; van Wijk & Harrison, 2013).

## 6.7 Combined thematic map

Below is a thematic map of the seven combined themes and their relationships among them.

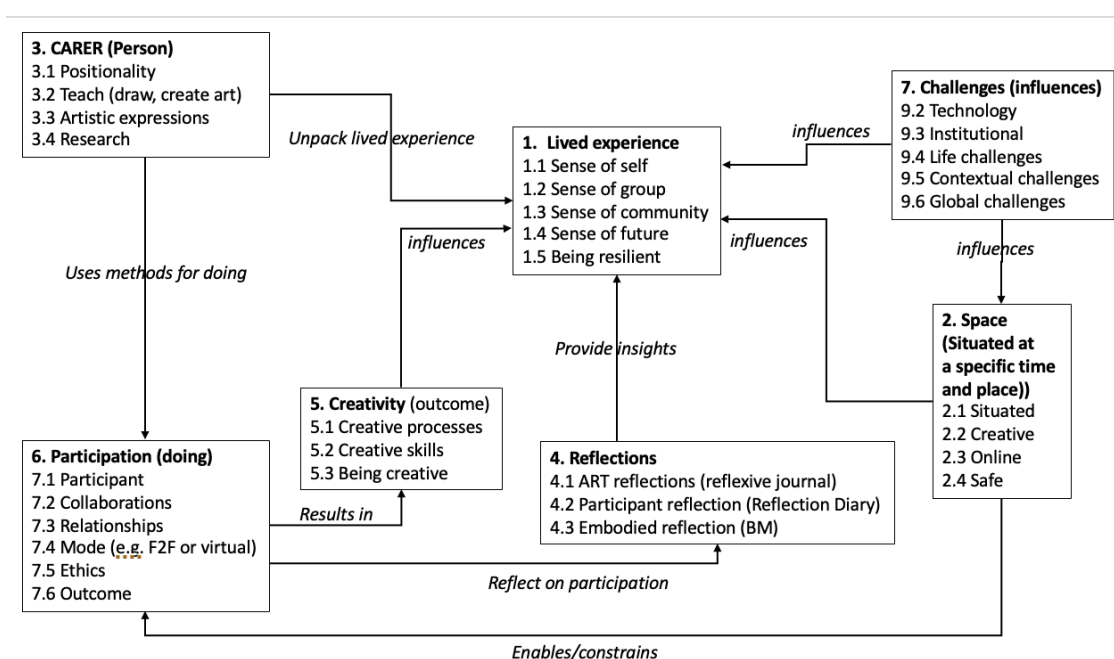


**Figure 6-3: The proposed combined thematic map and relationships**

The unit of analysis for all three strategies was the concept of *lived experience*. Lived experience is shaped by the CARER, who employs creative processes to teach art skills to individuals in compromised contexts, where the roles of artist, teacher, and researcher collectively contribute to understanding lived experience. Creativity further influences lived experience by providing mechanisms for probing and facilitating self-reflection, enabling individuals to articulate their insights. Reflection itself impacts lived experience, as the act of reflecting fosters self-discovery and a deeper awareness of one's lived realities. A safe space is essential to encourage openness, sharing, and expression of personal experiences, whereas challenges or constraints can inhibit self-reflection and the expression of lived experience. The theme of participation both influences and is influenced by creativity, reflection, and the space in which teaching and reflective activities take place.

## **6.8 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter outlined how a phased approach to data collection supported the growth of both the CARER and participants. Creative methods like body mapping and the “nest” metaphor fostered safety, reflection, and meaning-making. Embodied reflexivity through journaling, metaphors, and symbols deepened understanding and supported identity development. Despite challenges like COVID-19, the CARER adapted with care and creativity, showing the value of flexible, ethical methods in complex settings.

This study began by exploring insider–outsider dynamics in research, highlighting the need for reflexivity, ethics, and researcher participation. While existing literature discussed these ideas, it rarely connected them with specific research approaches. In contrast, this study used arts-based research and A/R/Tography to focus on lived experience and reflection. However, VOSviewer analysis revealed that such approaches were largely absent or disconnected in the literature, identifying a gap worth investigating.

VOSviewer analysis revealed a gap in the literature exploring concepts like storytelling and creative reflection, which were present but not well-connected. The gap pointed to a lack of integration, which the study aimed to address by bringing these ideas together through a creative and participatory lens.

Sustainable creative workshops were central to data collection, supporting participants and the CARER. Arts-based methods, such as body mapping and symbolic expression, helped participants gain insight, healing, and self-worth. The metaphor of the “nest” provided a safe, reflective space for CARER identity and transformation. *In-situ* creative interaction revealed deeper understandings of lived realities and fostered self-awareness.

As the study progressed, the researcher's identity evolved through reflexive facilitation and autoethnographic practice. When safely held, creative discomfort encouraged insight, especially in post-pandemic, low-resource contexts. Embodied, artistic reflection proved emotionally challenging but led to deeper understanding for the CARER and participants. Symbols, especially circular forms, became tools for connection and self-awareness and helped build trust and identity.

Face-to-face engagement remained vital during COVID-19, while online methods demanded emotional and ethical adaptability. The study met its aims by using participatory, creative methods within a phenomenological framework to understand marginalised experiences.

Combining creativity with phenomenology, the study explored lived, felt, and embodied realities in underserved and compromised contexts. It demonstrated that ethical practice was dynamic, and required readiness, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative decision-making. Ultimately, the research contributed new insights into arts-based methods that foster trust, expression, and mutual growth.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH



## **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a final reflection on the study and outlines its overall purpose, findings, and impact. It begins with an overview of the research conducted, followed by a revisit of the main research questions. A description of the study's contributions to knowledge, methodology, and practice is provided. It concludes with practical recommendations and suggestions for future research. Each section aims to show how the study added value and opened new directions in arts-based, participatory research with vulnerable groups.

## **7.2 Overview of the research conducted**

The CARER's experience of doing research was highlighted as being an artist and teacher. Engaging face-to-face with NEET youth in a rural town, facilitating sustainable creative processes, raised awareness of the real struggles that the youth underwent and the impact of their socio-economic struggles. Less than a fifth of those initially enrolled continued. Those that continued with the online creative facilitation during COVID-19 underlined their willingness to learn, participate, and reflect during a time of stress and uncertainty. Teaching sustainable creative processes to substance users within the confines of a rehabilitation centre drew attention to the CARER's confidence, resilience, and commitment. Participants showed innate, hidden creative talents during the workshops.

The life-sized body mapping artworks completed by the substance users emphasised that, through creativity, participants built confidence, improved and awakened drawing and creative capabilities, and created artworks sustainably to support their future endeavours. In addition, body mapping emphasised that through reflection, participants were made aware of the negative impact of their substance-dependency had on their minds and bodies. The CARER was ill-prepared for the strict rules and regulations encountered at the rehabilitation centre.

Teaching online developed the CARER's confidence and preparedness in the digital space. The CARER overcame challenges by employing a flexible approach to constraints, and facilitation was participant-centred. The principal lesson learnt was the importance of being empathetic to individuals in underserved and compromised contexts. Planning for researching as in-person sustainable creative processes was deterred by the impact of COVID-19. Doing research with substance users was not planned.

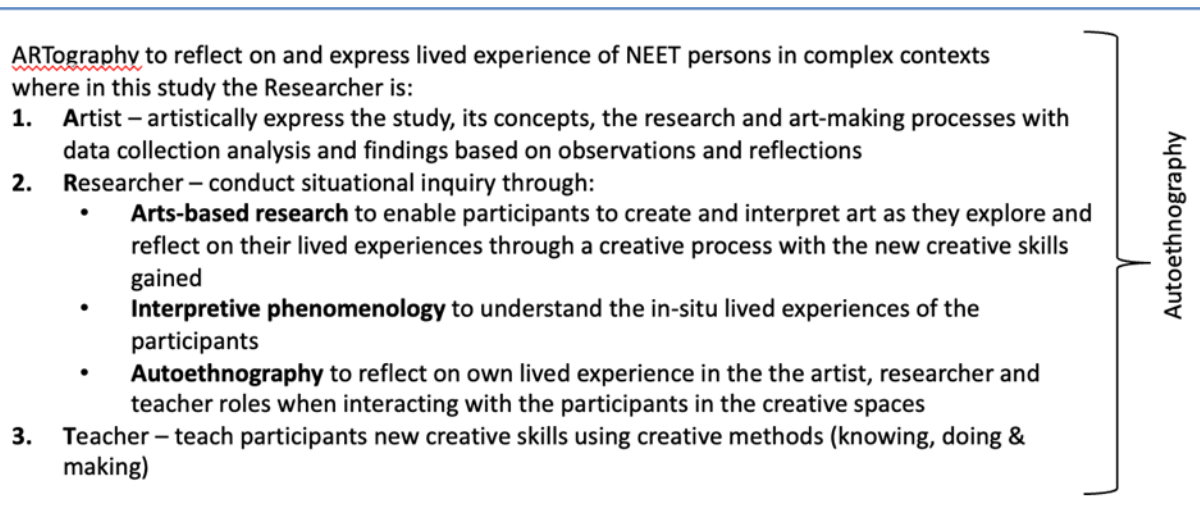


Figure 7-1: An A/R/Tography perspective on lived experience using arts-based, interpretive phenomenology, and autoethnographic research strategies while teaching creative processes

### 7.3 Research questions revisited

This chapter revisits the three core research questions that guided the study. The study reflects on what was discovered about the lived experiences of NEET youth and individuals in rehabilitation, how the researcher's artistic *in situ* interactions with participants supported deeper self-understanding, and what insights emerged through their artistic reflections. By revisiting these questions, the chapter draws together key findings to show how arts-based methods enabled meaningful expression and revealed complex lived realities in compromised contexts.

Table 7-1: Research questions, objectives, key concepts, and research role revisited.

| Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Research objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Key Concept                                            | Researcher Role              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| RQ1: How do people in compromised contexts experience their lived reality in a specific situation?                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the self-exploration of the participants' lived realities through their contextual engagements.</li> <li>• Establish meaning-making of the embodiment of the participant's lived reality.</li> </ul>                      | Lived experience                                       | Researcher as an interpreter |
| RQ2: How can the <i>in situ</i> interactions between the researcher as artist and persons during creative processes lead to an improved understanding of their own lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach participants creative methods to artistically express themselves.</li> <li>• Determine the interconnectedness of art and reality based on the artist's and participants' interactions during the creative process.</li> </ul> | Artistic expression, lived experience, creative skills | Artist, Researcher, Teacher  |

|                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                     |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe the emergence of the participants' meaning making through creative processes creating artistic expressions.</li> <li>• Create artistic expressions based on the insights gained during the study.</li> </ul> |                                                     |                    |
| RQ3: What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the participants' self-exploration during the research journey in the roles of artist, researcher, and teacher (CARER)</li> </ul>                                                                         | Reflections, Lived experience, artistic expressions | Artist, Researcher |

### 7.3.1 Research question 1

*RQ1: How do people in compromised contexts experience their lived reality in a specific situation?*

The study revealed that both NEET youth and men in substance abuse rehabilitation experienced challenges shaped by their environments, quarantine, and social pressures. The participants expressed difficult emotions through sustainable, creative, participatory methods and reflected on their identities, struggles, and hopes of how NEET youth gained a sense of belonging and confidence through online creative drawing engagement, while substance users used body mapping to make sense of addiction and recovery. Through an interpretive phenomenological approach, the CARER expanded research insights into participants' lived experiences, shared through artistic endeavours, which deepened understanding of their realities and offered insight into how creative expression supports healing and self-awareness in compromised contexts.

### 7.3.2 Research question 2

*RQ2: How can in situ interactions between the researcher as artist and persons in compromised contexts, during creative processes, lead to an improved understanding of their lived realities and ability to express these using their newly obtained creative skills?*

Through creative activities, which included sustainable printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, bookbinding, and body mapping, the researcher's' *in situ* interactions with NEET youth and substance users helped them reflect on and gain a deeper understanding of their daily situations. Deep, imaginative, and cooperative participation was made possible by the approach, which was guided by autoethnography and arts-based research. The lived experiences of the participants and the (a-r-t) were investigated through the use of A/R/Tography. It was easier for participants to relate personal experiences and to encouraged



emotional expression when they worked side by side in a collaborative setting. Participants were able to express themselves more clearly through art as a result of shared experiences that fostered trust, confidence, and creative abilities. The creative process evolved into a means of growth, connection, and self-discovery.

### **7.3.3 Research question 3**

*RQ3: What insights can be gained from the reflections as artistic expressions of the lived experiences of persons in compromised contexts?*

The study demonstrated that by using creative expression to reflect on life experiences, the researcher and the participants better understood themselves. The researcher adopted the (a-r-t) positions to encourage candid and vulnerable introspection. Participants used sustainable creative processes and metaphors to explore difficult emotions and past experiences. The creative process allowed them to express feelings that were hard to put into words. Artistic activities created space for deep reflection and helped participants connect with their own stories and those of others online and face-to-face.

The metaphor of a “nest” represented development, safety, and transformation, and the researcher found that employing autoethnography the (a-r-t) to integrate personal experience, cultural background, and narrative. The research remained truthful, emotionally honest, and ethically reflective despite challenges. The findings revealed that creating art facilitated personal growth, healing, and connection, allowing the CARER and participants to renew meaning in interpreting their lives.

### **7.4 Proposed refined conceptual framework**

The proposed framework, based on the reviewed literature to guide the data collection and analysis, is revisited to incorporate the thematic findings. Refer to Figure 2.8 in Chapter 2, sub-section 2.9, for the framework, which forms the basis of the proposed refined framework.

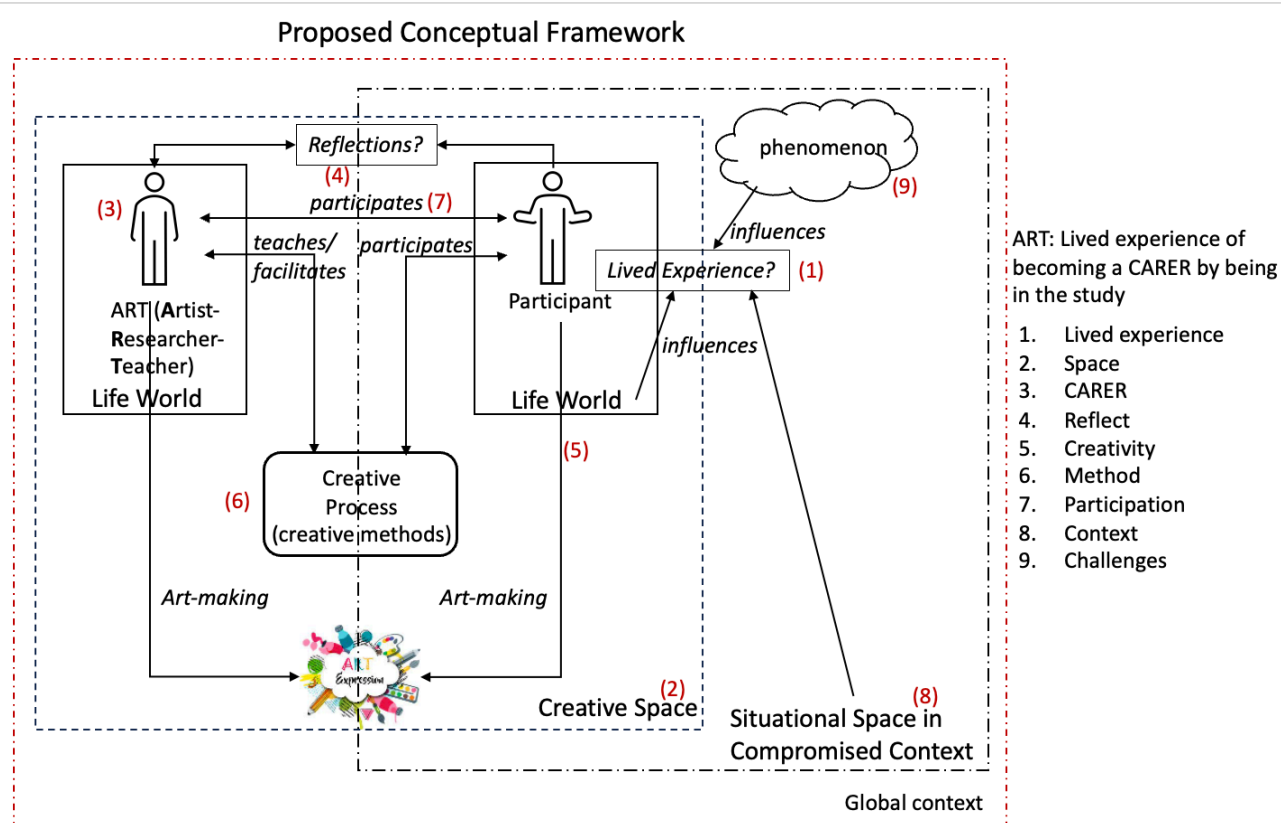


**Figure 7-2: proposed refined conceptual framework**

The framework was used to guide the situational inquiry of both cases to determine the specific phenomenon's influence on the participants' lived experiences. Eight combined themes were developed from the themes associated with each of the data sets from the two cases. These eight themes are now mapped to the proposed conceptual framework to indicate the relationships between the key concepts. *Theme 1* focuses on the lived experience of the researcher and participants as it is influenced by the phenomena, unemployment and substance abuse. It is also influenced by the situational space in the compromised context and the life world of the participant. *Theme 2*, the creative space, provides the space where the creative methods were taught, and where the participants expressed their self-exploration with the newly obtained creative skills. The creative space is temporarily enacted to enable the facilitation of the creative process of teaching, art-making, and reflecting by those in that space. *Theme 3* represents the transition of the CARER from being an artist to becoming proficient in teaching and research from an artist's perspective. The CARER's lived experience is influenced by her observations of the participants in the creative space when teaching creative processes based on their lived experiences, bound by the situation within a compromised context. Based on her reflections when conducting the research, using the three research strategies of interpretive phenomenology, arts-based research, and autoethnography, valuable insights were gained. *Theme 4* refers to reflections by the CARER and participants during the research to establish the influence of the creative processes on an

individual's lived experience. Reflections enabled the individual's sense of self, the group, and the future. *Theme 5* refers to the concept of creativity and how creativity can be enhanced through participating in the creative processes to express lived experience through art. *Theme 6* refers to the creative process concept and how this is influenced by the CARER's teaching and researching approaches to facilitate meaningful participation. *Theme 7*, participation, refers to the challenges and other factors that influence participation taking into account the individual's lived experience in a compromised context. *Theme 8* refers to the situational space in the compromised context and how that and the influences of the identified phenomenon impact an individual's lived experience.

## 7.5 Contributions

The contributions of this study are theoretical, methodological, and practical.

**Table 7-2: Outcomes and contributions**

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The expected contributions of this study are three-fold: | <p>(i) The importance of the co-participatory process in developing individuals' self-awareness, self-belief, and confidence which are all essential for creative, innovative action (Zamenopoulos &amp; Alexiou, 2018) and (Dorst &amp; Cross, 2001).</p> <p>(ii) A co-creative framework guided by literature and the CARER's insights, gained from utilising sustainable creative processes, to expose NEET youth during COVID-19 and substance users to methods that could assist with their self-explorations.</p> <p>(iii) The core components of the creative processes and their impact on the outcomes; contributing to creative projects and/or innovative research.</p> <p>The knowledge contribution insights were gained in using sustainable creative processes in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century creative skills based on NEET youth during the pandemic and substance users in a compromised context.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Firstly, recognise capabilities and generate sustainable creative opportunities so that NEET youth in underserved settings and substance users in compromised contexts gain a clearer sense of self and become more hopeful about the future.

Secondly, co-creation was essential for developing individuals' self-awareness, self-belief, and confidence, both online and in-person, crucial for fostering creative and innovative participation.

Thirdly, a co-creative framework guided by literature and the (a-r-ts) insights gained from utilising creative processes to support positively to the development of vulnerable individuals.

Fourthly, explore creative processes and body mapping to identify the core components of a generic creative process and assess the impact of the outcomes.

Finally, contribute to projects and research.

The knowledge contribution offers insights into using creative processes to develop 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills grounded in the capabilities of NEET youth and substance users in a complex context.

### 7.5.1 Knowledge contribution

The role of the researcher (interpretive phase) was incorporated through theoretical strands. This research process is relevant and significant, as empirical, practice-based research using co-creative approaches is continually emerging. The study contributed to my research and artistic journey by integrating creative-process approaches and methods within the design and social sciences disciplines to address a complex real-life problem.

Insights and findings were generated through arts-based research and A/R/Tography, viewed through an interpretive phenomenological lens. In addition, integrated, multi-level reflections informed the study.

Furthermore, the theoretical contributions extend to empirical research applying arts-based research and A/R/Tography through an interpretive phenomenological lens in complex contexts.

The pandemic posed ethical risks. Many community-based practitioners struggled to build and maintain partnerships, relationships, and projects during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, lowering ethical standards was not the view of the CARER. By using digital methods with NEET youth, ethics were maintained.

The theoretical contributions advance understandings of lived experience through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates perspectives from the arts, social sciences, and teaching and learning practices. The A/R/Tography perspective deepened theoretical understanding of the researcher's identity and positionality, and the transition opportunities to expand 'identity by combining the artist, researcher, and teacher roles into a complementary whole.

Methodologically, the study contributes to interdisciplinary research by demonstrating how IPA, ABR, and autoethnography can be integrated within an A/R/Tography perspective.

**Table 7-3: Theoretical contribution**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>This study contributes to theoretical understandings of lived experience by exploring it through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates perspectives from the arts, social sciences, and teaching and learning practices.</p> | <p>Knowledge contributions are based on theoretical strands and the research process.</p> <p>The insights gained from the knowledge and findings underpinned by an A/R/Tography perspective, drawing from the disciplines of art, research, and teaching and learning, contributed to each discipline and also an integrated perspective towards interdisciplinary studies.</p> <p>Empirically, the study used A/R/Tography, autoethnography, arts-based research, and interpretive phenomenology to guide the inquiry</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>of individuals' lived experiences, and co-participatory research applied in compromised contexts.</p> <p>Integration of reflection occurred on multiple levels.</p> <p>Ongoing acknowledgment and critical reflection on the researcher's identity throughout the research process contribute meaningfully to scholarship on researcher positionality. This study specifically engages with the shifting identity of the researcher—navigating the transition toward becoming a competent scholar while retaining an established identity as an artist. By incorporating an autoethnographic account, the study offers insights into the personal and professional experience of conducting a doctoral inquiry. Furthermore, reflections on the researcher's positionality—particularly the tensions between being an insider and outsider to the research context—deepen understandings of how meaning is co-constructed within relational and situated research environments.</p> |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### 7.5.2 Methodological contribution

Methodologically, the study contributed an integrated methodology that incorporated all aspects of complex phenomena, using creative processes. Combining methods of practice, social science, design methods, and creative and practical methods into a suitable research methodology for practice-led co-created reflective design research.

Employing arts-based research and A/R/Tography through an interpretive phenomenological lens explored the lived experiences of vulnerable populations using sustainable creative methods. The methodological contributions are:

- (1) A/R/Tography offered a distinct perspective by integrating the roles of artist-researcher-teacher. The (a-r-t) used ABR and A/R/Tography creativity as a strategic tool to gain insights into handling complex challenges. Through the lens of A/R/Tography, the “graphy” developed using metaphor, word, and visuals that challenged text-based research.
- (2) The researcher utilised autoethnography to reflect on her own journey and transformation, combining her roles as a CARER. The body of knowledge of practice-led, arts-based research explored how arts-based metaphors within arts processes and artefacts supported changes in personal understanding and how creativity assisted vulnerable individuals, which is a novel contribution.
- (3) Substance-dependent users in rehabilitation reflected how addiction and recovery through arts-based metaphors in body mapping encouraged how they saw themselves and helped them understand themselves in connection to their life situations, giving them hope, building their confidence, and providing healing. These body maps

represented more than art as they became embodied and symbolic expressions of resilience, reflection, and self-awareness.

- (4) Personal symbols, particularly circular forms, were inspired by transformative experiences and played a crucial role in shaping participant and A/R/T identities. However, recent literature demonstrates a clear gap in exploring how such personal symbolism influenced research methodologies and the development of artistic identity.
- (5) The CARER's nest, eggs, and incubator metaphors served as reflective, research concepts and methodological tools, offering a framework for identity, creativity, and safety, and introduced a conceptual model that explained how creativity and safety could coexist in the study. Online and in-person safe spaces became their own "nest" where participants felt secure to share, explore, and grow. This environment encouraged empathy and open dialogue in challenging situations.
- (6) During the COVID-19 pandemic, the research process unfolded over time, including shifts between online and face-to-face workshops. Despite challenges, the study highlighted how creative expression could support healing, resilience, and a stronger sense of identity for marginalised youth.
- (7) The study contributed to how the A/R/T employed social and ethical flexibility to balance research goals with the community's and individuals' needs.

**Table 7-4: Methodological contribution summary**

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Methodological contribution through a reflexive practice of being an artist/teacher becoming an artist/researcher/teacher. | <p>This research is relevant and significant because research into arts-based research with co-participatory approaches is continuously emerging. The purpose is to contribute to this with the CARER's research and artistic journey by integrating approaches and methods from the creative processes with the design and social sciences disciplines to understand a complex real-life problem from the individuals' perspectives.</p> <p>Methodologically, the study contributes an integrated research methodology that incorporates the aspects of complex phenomena, using sustainable creative processes.</p> <p>Combining methods of practice, social science, design methods, creative and practical methods into a suitable research methodology for co-created reflective design research.</p> <p>The study contributed to ethical research practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The methodological contribution enhanced the body of knowledge of arts-based research, with insights into the role of the CARER.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### 7.5.3 Practical contribution

Role of artist (practice-led phase); Together with the participants online and in-person, we expressed ourselves in creative ways to create artworks utilising sustainable printmaking, and creative and body mapping processes.

Practical contribution: The contribution to the design discipline informed insights into the application of arts-based research using creative processes. Practical guidelines derived from the proposed framework can be used by community development agencies to develop NEET youth and substance users to be better prepared for sustaining a living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Involving participants in engaging creatively by utilising sustainable creative processes was taught to instil values and principles related to sustainability and social responsibility. Ideas and inspiration for printmaking and eco-dyed prints were created by collecting items, i.e., plants, non-toxic waste materials, and repurposed materials, etc. in the environment or from home. One of my interventions was bringing about awareness related to waste collection for printing techniques that were intrinsically tied to the CARER's sustainable practice.

**Table 7-5: Practical contributions**

|                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Role of artist                                                        | Together with the participants we expressed ourselves in creative ways to create sustainable artworks utilising printmaking processes and body mapping.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| As artist and art teacher to facilitate creative processes' workshops | <p>The contribution to the design discipline includes further insights into the application of arts-based research using creative processes.</p> <p>A general practical contribution involved participants in complex contexts engaging creatively by utilising sustainable printmaking and body mapping skills to instil values and principles related to sustainability, social responsibility, and messages of hope.</p> <p>Ideas and inspiration for prints was collecting items, i.e., plants, non-toxic waste materials, and repurposed materials etc., in their environment or from their homes during the COVID restrictions.</p> <p>One of the ART's interventions was related to waste collection for printmaking, creating artwork of value.</p> <p>The practical contribution derived from practical guidelines, stemming from the proposed framework, to develop NEET youth during COVID-19 and substance users to an empowered state in the 21st century.</p> <p>Teaching participants sustainable creative skills.</p> |

## 7.6 Recommendations and further research

In contrast, this study used arts-based research and A/R/Tography to focus on lived experience and reflection. The (a-r-t) used ABR and A/R/Tography creativity as a strategic tool to gain insights into handling complex challenges. However, the VOSviewer analysis

revealed that such approaches were mainly absent or disconnected in the literature, highlighting a gap worth investigating.

The VOSviewer analysis revealed a gap in the literature where concepts like storytelling and creative reflection appeared but lacked strong connections. This gap showed a lack of integration, which the study aimed to address by connecting these ideas through an innovative and participatory lens. The analysis also highlighted an opportunity for further exploration into how symbols shape and reflect the identities of researchers and artists.

There was a noticeable absence in recent literature on how personal symbolism, such as circular forms, influenced research methodologies and the development of artistic identity. Additionally, the impact of personal circular symbols on creative identity and research practice remained largely undiscussed.

Conducting research during the pandemic disrupted data collection and exposed flaws in existing ethics review systems. The study highlighted the value of adopting an adaptive, opportunity-based approach for navigating complex situations without compromising ethical standards. It also recommended emphasising and demonstrating clear participant benefits when reflecting on facilitation through a moral lens, suggesting this as an area for further research.

## **7.7 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter illustrated how co-creative, practice-based research integrating creative, design, and social science approaches was supported by the interpretive role of the researcher, guided by key theories. A phenomenological approach to A/R/Tography and arts-based research offered important insights into the lived realities of marginalised communities.

The A/R/T maintained ethical flexibility in the face of COVID-19's ethical issues, promoting trust and compassion, particularly while interacting digitally with NEET youth. Autoethnography, metaphors, and body mapping promoted participant expression, healing, and resilience, while A/R/Tography combined the roles of the A/R/T. Circles and nests are examples of symbols that form identity and establish secure environments for development.

Sustainable creative techniques, such as printmaking, eco-dyeing, weaving, bookbinding, and body mapping, provided valuable guidance for community agencies assisting NEET youth and substance-dependant individuals recovery during the practice-led phase. The study addressed the gaps that VOSviewer pointed out, most notably the lack of integration in research between symbolic identification, creative reflection, and narrative.



The need for flexible, opportunity-based ethical approaches that put participant benefits first and offer ideas for future research on ethical facilitation was brought to light by the pandemic disruptions, which exposed weaknesses in ethics review procedures.



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## APPENDIX A: Online data collection excerpt

| Q1 Please share your experience from participating in research on whatsapp?                                                                                                    | Q2 How did you experience drawing activities and finding drawing material?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Q3 How did you find doing reflection journal?                                                  | Q4 How would you feel about face to face workshop?                                                                                                                               | Q5 Anything you would like to suggest to help us involve youth?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The research was so great, like it's taking care of our community and keeping the youth busy. It also give knowledge to appreciate small things like to make use of recycling. | A brief experience about my drawing. It was obviously difficult to make it as everyone can see it's not perfect, I'm not good at drawing skills of any type. I enjoyed this exercise hence I was forcing myself at something I know I'm not good at which I was willing to make it possible. On the other side of understanding the exercise I think maybe I still need to know the objective it aims to achieve, I won't lie, I used Black coloured Pencil. | Like I said in the first question it makes you make use of recycling and it was not difficult. | It would be great but now I'm in Eastern Cape I will come back next year in Grabouw around January to February, but I would like to participate if you other projects next year. | It's a good thing to always bring the project in our community to keep the youth busy. It would be great to also teach the youth skills like how to create your own money (financial advisor). Starting slowly from small things and what we have around the community that would add to in creating job opportunities. |
| My data is also finish                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2020/11/17 11:16:58 AM GMT+2,"It was good, but people were seemed not interested I don't know maybe they need some motivation.                                                 | I was starting to enjoy although it was a bit boring at first. I will send my activities when I have enough data, but there is something that I don't understand here. U guys keep on giving us activities but u didn't provide us with any resources. How are we supposed to do these activities if we don't have all the necessary material for example stationary.                                                                                        | It was a little bit challenging                                                                | It would be great                                                                                                                                                                | You guys should try something interesting to make your project fun and enjoyable.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 2020/11/17 1:14:33 PM GMT+2,"There's many ways to make it in life, as covid19 was the but did not stop good things to happen.                                                  | Drawing and finding was very difficult for me as I am not good in drawing I am good in motivation and speeching to people, (solving problems and educating etc).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Very challenging and making me see my Strength and weaknesses                                  | I will be very happy as I can talk out my dream and maybe my doors will be open.                                                                                                 | Come down to rural areas and help youth, as there's talent but no one to help them, rural areas development is the only way to build better country. MAY MY FEEDBACK MAKE ARE CHANGE I THANK YOU ðŸ™                                                                                                                    |

## APPENDIX B: Body Mapping Workshop Plan

| <b>Body map workshop Day One – 18 March 2022 (3 hours morning session)</b><br><b>9:30 – 13:00</b>                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Introductions and ground rules; meaning of color; tracing outlines and name, surname and date of birth body map exercises; written, drawing, sharing childhood years and body map exercise; evaluation; and homework. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Introductions and ground rules (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After registration, and participants are seated around tables facing one another wearing their name tags, the workshop can begin.</li> <li>• Start the workshop with introductions. A good method of opening up participants to the concept of sharing is to ask everyone to introduce themselves by their name and tell the story of the origin of their names.</li> <li>• The facilitator introduces themselves in the same way. With the story behind each names, the names are easier to remember.</li> <li>• The facilitator then outlines the purpose of the workshop and invites and addresses questions of clarity before participants discuss the ground rules that will apply to all participants equally.</li> <li>• If the facilitator sees that participants do not raise certain important ground rules, they can be added. Ground rules should cover: punctuality, respectful listening, confidentiality, cell phones off or on silent, active participation, sensitivity, no one may dominate or consume group time.</li> </ul> <p>Further ground rules can be added to the list as the workshop progresses over the five days. The ground rules can be neatly written on A1 paper and pasted on the walls or windows as a reminder to all the participants of their commitment to one another. With this done, it is time to begin the first exercise.</p> <p><i>What is focusing</i></p> <p>“Our bodies carry our situations. We carry our life with us. Our bodies can total up years of all kinds of experience and at any moment give us something new, a more intricate step”<br/>Eugene Gendlin.</p> <p>Focusing is an experiential practice, It accesses the body's innate potential, allowing us to tap new forward-living energies. By paying attention to the way our bodies hold an issue – called a Felt Sense in Focusing language – we make fresh connections, and bring to our lives explicitly, our rich explicit wisdom. As we listen deeply to ourselves we connect with a special kind of self-knowing that holds more than our familiar thoughts and feelings. When we pause to attend to the bodily quality of what we can sense vaguely , but don't yet have words for, we can find new articulation for experiences that are forming inside us in the present moment.</p> <p>Through Focusing, we also develop a deeper curiosity and kindness towards our own experience, If we can open the curious about what we sense vaguely and palpably inside, it will come alive, open to us, and move forward – this process is creative, wholesome and healing.</p> <p>Using the Focusing method, we work creatively and resonantly with our Felt Sense in a life-forward direction. Forward movements, or “shifts” yield new, surprising possibilities. This is an innovative way to invite change and growth: it feels satisfying and life-giving rather than pain-driven because it is essentially self-resourcing.</p> <p>Compiled by Patricia Orner and Pam Wernich</p> |
| 10:00 – 10:30                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Exercise 1 - Written (30 mins)</p> <p>Early childhood years</p> <p>Seated at the tables, participants are asked to reflect on themselves, their experiences in their journals as a teenager.</p> <p>The facilitator should present guidelines verbally and guidelines should be copied neatly on A4 sheet(s) of paper or typed up and photocopied for each participant in advance of the workshop.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Exercise 2 - The meaning of colour (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different societies and cultures attach different meanings and significance to color and some meanings are deeply personal. In this exercise, the facilitator colors in a</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|               | <p>block of color on the left hand side of an A3 piece of body map card so that the color against the brown background is clearly visible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting with the primary colors: red, blue and yellow, and black and white, the facilitator then asks: what associations do you have with this color? A volunteer among participants, with neat handwriting, is invited to act as the scribe.</li> <li>Participants brainstorm what associations they have with the color in the block and the scribe records the meanings put forward by participants alongside the color.</li> <li>Associations may be contradictory, for example, the color white is a neutral colour associated with purity, virginity, cleanliness, healing and spirituality but it is also associated with oppression and surrender.</li> <li>Black is regarded as a strong color associated with authority and power, which is why professionals wear black, but it is also associated with submission, shame and guilt, depression, grief and loss.</li> <li>When the meaning of a particular colour is exhausted, the facilitator moves on to the next color until a variety of secondary colors are also covered.</li> <li>Stick up the color chart on the wall, which acts as a reference for participants as they perform visualization and drawing exercises, and when adding color to their body maps.</li> </ul> <p>Materials: Card, oil pastels in a variety of colors, and a black permanent marker. Show presentation on colour.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | <p>Exercise 3 - Body map (60 mins)<br/>Tracing outlines, writing name, surname and date of birth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracing outlines: This is a critical exercise and will be the template for all the exercises that follow. It is important not to rush the exercise, as mistakes cannot be erased (unless it is done in pencil first).</li> <li>The facilitator demonstrates the exercise with a participant as her or his partner. The partner must lie down on the card extending the limbs (arms and legs) in a position that enables viewers to see the whole body in its fullest proportions. Some flexibility with the positioning of arms and legs is desirable so that the body maps do not all look alike. For example, the left arm can be up and right arm down alongside the body; fingers can be extended or held in a fist. Tuck clothing under the person's body so that the permanent marker does not leave unsightly marks on clothing.</li> <li>Arrange the participant's hair as well. The person lying down on the card must remain still throughout the tracing exercise.</li> <li>Holding a black permanent marker straight downwards towards the card, and not at an angle, the facilitator traces the contours of the person's body. It is challenging tracing feet, as they protrude upwards but ankles have flexibility so can be pushed straight down or sideways to get the effect of feet. The head and hair is challenging as well – the head may look bigger because of hair surrounding the face and shoulders, which is fine.</li> <li>When the facilitator has demonstrated how to trace her or his partner's contour, she or he must lie on the card making sure that some areas of her or his body does not completely overlap with the black contoured tracing.</li> <li>The partner then traces the facilitator's body in a brown permanent marker. The areas outside the black outlines are the shadow. More about shadows come later on day four.</li> <li>On completion of the demonstration, participants working in pairs must carefully trace the contours of their bodies. The first contour will be the persons whose body map it is and is traced in a black permanent marker.</li> <li>When this is done perfectly and to completion, the partner lies on the card and her or his contour is traced over the first contour with a brown permanent marker, allowing some areas to extend beyond the black contour.</li> <li>This exercise is repeated on the second card in reverse order. Still working in pairs, the partner who was the second person to be traced in a brown permanent marker on the first card is now the first person to be traced on the second card with a black permanent marker. At the end of the exercise each participant has a body map with her or his outline traced in black permanent marker and that of their partner's traced in a brown permanent marker.</li> </ul> <p>Note: Instead of tracing the contours in permanent markers, trace them first in soft 4B to 6B lead pencils. The first outline is immediately gone over with a black permanent marker and the second contour in a brown permanent marker. Rub out the pencil lines with an eraser.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing name, surname and date of birth: In neat, bold, clear handwriting (8 to 10 cm in height) and working in lead pencil, participants write their names on the top left hand corner (as they face their body maps) or across the top of their body map</li> </ul> |

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|               | <p>(depending on the best space available outside the contours) and underneath their names their dates of birth. When participants are satisfied with the way they have written their names, the pencil lines are gone over in a permanent marker, pencil lines are erased, and names are given color with pencil crayons, oil pastels or metallic paint, with borders or decorations. When participants have completed this exercise, they must return the materials used for the exercise to the table. The paintbrushes used for metallic paint must be cleaned immediately or put in the bucket of water to soak.</p> <p>Note: The facilitator must try to understand the sequencing and context of the conflict from whence participants come from. From participants' date of birth, she or he can work out how old participants were when their country, region, province or village faced conflict and when that trauma is likely to have affected participants and their families.</p> <p>For example, if participants are young and conflict recent, their early childhood or schooling may have been disrupted. This becomes the homework of the facilitator as she or he prepares for the subsequent day's life story exercises.</p> <p>Materials: One 2,2 x 1,5 m card for each participant, black and brown permanent markers, lead pencils, erasers, rulers, pencil crayons, oil pastels, metallic paint and fine paintbrushes.</p> |
| 13:00         | LUNCH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 13:30 – 16:00 | Lino carving techniques, supported by a short you tube video and examples of lino prints                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Body map workshop Day One – 18 March 2022

### Reflection questions

1. How did you feel yesterday when you first entered the creative classroom?
2. How do you feel this morning?
3. What is your name & surname?
4. What is the meaning of your name
5. What is your chosen pseudo name
6. How does your pseudo name relate to you personally?
7. What is your country of birth, region and province / village?
8. How old are you?
9. What is your favourite colour/s and why?

| Body map workshop Day Two – 19 March 2022 (3 hours morning session)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Introductions and ground rules; meaning of colour; tracing outlines and name, surname and date of birth body map exercises; written, drawing, sharing early childhood years and body map exercise; evaluation; and homework continued. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 9:30 – 10:30                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Exercise 4 – Reflection questions (30 minutes)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Exercise 5 – Drawing exercise, Early childhood (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants are asked to draw one drawing that reflects their early childhood life of home or community, or the drawing they frequently drew as a child. Participants are then asked to color in their drawings reflecting on the meaning of color chosen</li> </ul> <p>Referencing their journal writings and drawings, participants' early childhood experiences are written and drawn in lead pencil below their name and date of birth on the left side of the card.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early childhood narratives should not cover more than 500 to 800 cm down the side of the card, outside and between of the black and brown contours.</li> <li>When participants have used all the available space efficiently in both words and images, and having consulted the facilitator on their pencil draft, participants go over the pencil writing in permanent markers and add color to their drawings taking into account the meaning of color.</li> </ul> <p>Note: Participants must not panic if they do not manage to complete this exercise within the time allocated but at least the draft drawing and writing should be mapped out. If working with journals, encourage participants to paste their A4 drawings in their journals with glue but one centimeter must be cut off the tops and sides of the page so that it fits neatly in the journal.</p> <p>Materials: Lead pencils, erasers, permanent markers, wax crayons, oil and chalk pastels, pencil crayons, scissors and glue.</p> |
| 11:30 – 12:50                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Exercise 6 - Body map exercise – Early childhood (80 mins)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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| 12:50 – 13:00      | <p>Day Two - Evaluation (10 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the end of the day, the facilitator should ask participants to describe in one word how they feel at the end of the first day.</li> <li>These one-word evaluations can be recorded by the facilitator or written on an A1 sheet of paper by a volunteer participant.</li> </ul> <p>If the same word is used more than once, tick it as many times as it is used.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 13:00 – 13:30      | LUNCH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Day Two - Homework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants are encouraged to read through their early childhood life stories, underline significant people in their lives, those who loved and nurtured them and had a positive influence. Participants can continue writing about their early childhood memories, as events or memories may be recalled later, or jogged by what another participant may have shared, or because the time allocated to the exercise was insufficient.</li> </ul> <p>Exercise 7 - Sharing exercise – Early childhood (30 mins)</p> <p>Materials: A4/letter sheets of paper, pencils, erasers, wax crayons and pencil crayons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each participant is given a few minutes to share their early childhood story and drawing with the group. The facilitator must monitor the time and encourage short, summary presentations. Sad or traumatic experiences in participants' early childhood may be revealed. The decision to share their sad or traumatic experience is entirely their choice.</li> </ul> <p>All participants are expected to listen respectfully to everyone else for the next session Thursday 24 March 2022</p> |
|                    | The facilitator is also encouraged to write their reflections of the day, transcribe or enter the one-word evaluations in their journal (that can be added in the workshop report) and prepare for Day Two by reading the toolkit and preparing the workshop venue and materials, such as, sharpening pencils and pencil crayons, and washing the paintbrushes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 13:30 – 17:00      | Lino printing techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Body map workshop Day Two – 19 March 2022

### Reflection questions

1. Reflect shortly what you can remember as a child?
2. As a child what was your favourite thing to do
3. What did you draw frequently as a child?
4. Which school did you attend?
5. From memory what you remember about your school?
6. As you grew up what were you good at
7. What grade did you complete at school?
8. Did you do any further studies or did you work?
9. If you worked, where and for how long?
10. Where you married or are you married?
11. Do you have any children?
12. If you have any, shortly tell me about him/her?
13. Underline significant people in your life, those who loved and nurtured you and had a positive influence?

| Body map workshop Day Three – 24 March 2022 (3 hours morning session)                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| 9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Recap; portraiture; the skin; skeletal and muscular systems; school years life story writing, drawing and sharing exercises; evaluation; and, homework.     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| With everyone seated at the table, the facilitator recaps the progress of the previous day, and outlines the exercises to be accomplished on the third day. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                | <p>Continuation of childhood and young adult memory in image and in word.</p> <p>Elephant - Strong, empathetic, ambitious, protective.</p> <p>Tortoise - Deliberate, patient, invulnerable to attack.</p> <p>Cat - Independent, vigilant, territorial, curious.</p> <p>Donkey - Hardworking, patient, humble.</p> <p>Write in your reflection book what your magic animal you chose means to you.</p> |
| 10:30 – 11:30                                                                                                                                               | <p>Exercise 8 – Drawing exercise – Portraiture (60 mins) in reflection book.</p> <p>A portrait is a painting, photograph or sculpture of a person, in which a face and its expression is the main element, displaying likeness, personality, and mood of a person.</p>                                                                                                                                |



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|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a fun exercise. Each participant is asked to study her or his face in the mirror. They must look at their eyes in relation to their ears and nose, and the proportions of their faces above and below their eyes.</li> <li>• Participants are asked to quickly draw their portraits as reflected in their mirrors. There will be much laughter in the room, as everyone does quick sketches, because most will get the proportions horrible wrong. So everyone will start again on the other side of their page or on another blank piece of A4 paper.</li> <li>• It is time for the facilitator's input. The face is oval shaped. Measure the length of your face by balancing a book on top of your head and with a ruler measure from the book balanced on the head to the chin.</li> <li>• The facilitator then draws an oval shape on A1 paper and dissects it in the middle in four quadrants by drawing horizontal and vertical lines.</li> <li>• The bottoms of the eye sockets are halfway up the head, just above the horizontal line. The tops of the ears are normally in line with the eyes.</li> <li>• Participants are then tasked to start again. They must fold their A4 page horizontally and vertically and draw both lines with a pencil using a ruler. Balancing their journals on their heads and working in pairs to get their measurements right, participants must measure their faces from their journals to their chins and from ear to ear. These measurements, from top to bottom and from side to side, are written down on the A4 page.</li> <li>• Participants must draw an oval shape according to these measurements in the quadrants using a ruler. The oval shape can be adjusted if the participant's face is narrow and thin or round and chubby.</li> <li>• Participants are asked to study their eyes, just above the horizontal line, to mark the outer edge of their eyes near the ear and inner part of the eyes near the bridge of the nose on the page, and then they draw their eyes getting the size, shape and proportions right. The bridge of the nose lines up with the top of the eyes. The mouth is between the eyes and the chin in the lower quadrant.</li> <li>• Each participant's facial features are unique: faces have smile, worry and aging lines, marks and scars, which must be added to the portraits. Participants might have nose or earrings, or a bindi worn by married Hindi women; these can be added to their portraits.</li> <li>• The facilitator can keep reminding participants to study their reflections in the mirror and draw what they see until they are satisfied that their portraits are a reasonable likeness to how they look. The facilitator goes around the tables and assists with measuring proportions and detailing as well.</li> </ul> <p>The quadrants of the face</p>  <p>Materials: A mirror for each participant, blank A4 sheets of paper, lead pencils and erasers, rulers, and journals to mark the top of the head.</p> |
| 11:30 – 13:00 | <p>Exercise 8 - Portraiture exercise – Body map (60 mins)</p> <p>Participants take their mock-up portraits and draw their faces on their body maps in lead pencil. They can continue to look at their reflections in the mirror as they transfer their portraits on the card.</p> <p>Materials: Card, rulers, mirrors, pencils and erasers.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|               | <p>In one word describe today's body mapping exercise.</p> <p>Homework, reflection on what you liked /or did not like? What did you learn?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 13:00 – 16:00 | <p>Continuation and completion of lino printing</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| Body map workshop Day Four – 25 March 2022 (3 hours morning session)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
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| Recap; portraiture; the skin; skeletal and muscular systems; school years life story writing, drawing and sharing exercises; evaluation; and, homework.     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| With everyone seated at the table, the facilitator recaps the progress of the previous day, and outlines the exercises to be accomplished on the third day. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                | <p>Exercise 9 - The skin (30 mins)</p> <p>With participants sitting at the tables, the facilitator shares information about the skin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The skin, the outer covering of our body, is our largest organ. It is visible whereas our other organs are invisible. Skin ranges in color depending on the amount of melanin produced by the skin. It is made up of seven layers and guards the underlying muscles, bones, ligaments and internal organs. Human skin is covered with hair follicles, but can appear hairless.</li> <li>If you are older skin can be dry or oily. As skin ages, it becomes thinner and more easily damaged, and it sags and wrinkles. Damaged skin will try to heal by forming scar tissue, which is often discolored and depigmented.</li> <li>Human skin is seldom unscathed of marks and scarring. We may have birthmarks, moles, freckles, beauty spots, vaccination marks, stretch marks, or skin conditions, such as acne, eczema, shingles, warts or baldness.</li> <li>We might have scars from injuries, from superficial scrapes to deeper wounds inflicted by hard objects, such as bullets, a surgeon's knife, household knife or any other injury</li> <li>All these marks define who we are and our personal histories.</li> </ul> <p>Most common skin markings</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Beauty spots</b></td><td>Dark moles or freckles commonly found on the face</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Freckles</b></td><td>Small darker patches on the skin that often become pronounced through sun exposure.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Burns</b></td><td>Second-and third-degree burns can cause scars. Deeper burns develop into darker scars while shallow scars are lighter or may not scar at all</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Hair follicles</b></td><td>Hair follicles are damaged so scarred areas are hairless. Moles<br/>Oval or round, symmetrical growths on the skin that are typically brown or black.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Moles</b></td><td>Moles can occur anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups. Most moles appear in early childhood and during the first 25 years of a person's life.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Birthmarks</b></td><td>Congenital irregularities of the skin that present at birth or appear shortly after birth, and occur anywhere on the skin.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Chicken pox</b></td><td>Chicken pox mark are caused by a highly contagious virus and characterized by itchy red blisters that appear all over the body that mostly affects children and can leave scars.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Vaccines</b></td><td>Both smallpox and BCG vaccines leave a scar, mostly on the upper arm.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Pregnancy</b></td><td>Pregnancy, puberty and rapid weight gain can cause stretch marks.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Scars</b></td><td>Scars inflicted by hard objects like permanent markings from torture, beatings, wounds inflicted by knives, bullets surgical operations or other.</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Stretch marks</b></td><td>Long, narrow streaks or stripes that occur when the skin is stretched too quickly.</td></tr> </table> | <b>Beauty spots</b> | Dark moles or freckles commonly found on the face | <b>Freckles</b> | Small darker patches on the skin that often become pronounced through sun exposure. | <b>Burns</b> | Second-and third-degree burns can cause scars. Deeper burns develop into darker scars while shallow scars are lighter or may not scar at all | <b>Hair follicles</b> | Hair follicles are damaged so scarred areas are hairless. Moles<br>Oval or round, symmetrical growths on the skin that are typically brown or black. | <b>Moles</b> | Moles can occur anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups. Most moles appear in early childhood and during the first 25 years of a person's life. | <b>Birthmarks</b> | Congenital irregularities of the skin that present at birth or appear shortly after birth, and occur anywhere on the skin. | <b>Chicken pox</b> | Chicken pox mark are caused by a highly contagious virus and characterized by itchy red blisters that appear all over the body that mostly affects children and can leave scars. | <b>Vaccines</b> | Both smallpox and BCG vaccines leave a scar, mostly on the upper arm. | <b>Pregnancy</b> | Pregnancy, puberty and rapid weight gain can cause stretch marks. | <b>Scars</b> | Scars inflicted by hard objects like permanent markings from torture, beatings, wounds inflicted by knives, bullets surgical operations or other. | <b>Stretch marks</b> | Long, narrow streaks or stripes that occur when the skin is stretched too quickly. |
| <b>Beauty spots</b>                                                                                                                                         | Dark moles or freckles commonly found on the face                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Freckles</b>                                                                                                                                             | Small darker patches on the skin that often become pronounced through sun exposure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
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| <b>Hair follicles</b>                                                                                                                                       | Hair follicles are damaged so scarred areas are hairless. Moles<br>Oval or round, symmetrical growths on the skin that are typically brown or black.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Moles</b>                                                                                                                                                | Moles can occur anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups. Most moles appear in early childhood and during the first 25 years of a person's life.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Birthmarks</b>                                                                                                                                           | Congenital irregularities of the skin that present at birth or appear shortly after birth, and occur anywhere on the skin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Chicken pox</b>                                                                                                                                          | Chicken pox mark are caused by a highly contagious virus and characterized by itchy red blisters that appear all over the body that mostly affects children and can leave scars.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Vaccines</b>                                                                                                                                             | Both smallpox and BCG vaccines leave a scar, mostly on the upper arm.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Pregnancy</b>                                                                                                                                            | Pregnancy, puberty and rapid weight gain can cause stretch marks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Scars</b>                                                                                                                                                | Scars inflicted by hard objects like permanent markings from torture, beatings, wounds inflicted by knives, bullets surgical operations or other.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| <b>Stretch marks</b>                                                                                                                                        | Long, narrow streaks or stripes that occur when the skin is stretched too quickly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                               | <p>Exercise 10 - Drawing exercise – Skin markings (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After the facilitator has shared the above information about the skin, each participant is given an A4 photocopy of page 11 of this toolkit.</li> <li>Participants are asked to draw all the marks and scars on their skin on the sheet in their reflection book, small or big, visible or faint, keeping in mind the left and right sides of their bodies are reversed when looking at the page, and to write a few words about each mark.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |
| 11:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                                               | <p>Exercise 11 - Body map exercise – Skin markings (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants draw all the markings on their bodies in pencil and write brief explanations (one word is often sufficient) about the markings and scars on their</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                     |                                                   |                 |                                                                                     |              |                                                                                                                                              |                       |                                                                                                                                                      |              |                                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                 |                                                                       |                  |                                                                   |              |                                                                                                                                                   |                      |                                                                                    |

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|               | <p>body map in legible handwriting in pencil. Then they write it in a permanent marker, after which the pencil lines are erased. Participants then colour the markings, as realistically as possible, using pencil crayons, not lead pencils or permanent markers on their body map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When complete return back to other sections that is not complete to complete</li> </ul> <p>Materials: One A4 photocopy of page 11 for each participant, lead pencils, erasers, pencil crayons and permanent markers.</p> |
|               | <p>In one word describe today's body mapping exercise.</p> <p>Homework, reflection on what you liked /or did not like? What did you learn?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 13:00 – 16:00 | Introduction to collagraph printing and preparation of collagraph plate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| Body map workshop Day Five – 26 March 2022 (3 hours)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |              |                                                                                         |           |                                                  |           |                                                                                                                                 |    |                                                                                                              |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| Introductions and ground rules; Recap; portraiture; the skin; skeletal and muscular systems; school years life story writing, drawing and sharing exercises; evaluation; and, homework. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |              |                                                                                         |           |                                                  |           |                                                                                                                                 |    |                                                                                                              |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Exercise 12 - Exercise – The skeletal system (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The skeletal system includes all the bones and joints in the body.</li> <li>• The human skeleton is the internal framework of the body.</li> <li>• Adults have 212 bones including the bones in the ears. The main function of the skeleton is to provide protection to our internal organs, in particular the chest and the rib cage.</li> <li>• Muscles attach to bones to provide movement. Our bone marrow produces red blood cells that carry oxygen around the body.</li> <li>• Humans have four main types of moveable joints:</li> <li>• Hinge joints: The knee and elbow are examples of hinge joints as are fingers and toes, allowing extension and flexing.</li> <li>• Ball-and-socket joints: Ball-and-socket joints are found in the hip and shoulder and allow movement in many directions.</li> <li>• Pivot joint: The pivot joint is found in the neck that enables the head to rotate side to side.</li> <li>• Gliding joints: Gliding joints are found between the carpal bones in the wrist and between the carpals and metacarpals of the palm, and between the tarsal bones of the ankle and between the tarsal and metatarsal bones of the foot.</li> <li>• The bones of the wrist and ankles move by gliding over each other.</li> </ul> <p>Common bone conditions</p> <table> <tr> <td>Osteoporosis</td><td>As we age we lose bone density, which makes our bones brittle and more likely to break.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Arthritis</td><td>Arthritis refers to joint pain or joint disease.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Scoliosis</td><td>This is a sideways curvature of the spine that occurs most often during the growth spurt just before puberty. Bone tuberculosis</td></tr> <tr> <td>TB</td><td>This TB is extra-pulmonary (TB outside the lungs) that affects, above all, the spine, long bones and joints.</td></tr> <tr> <td>The muscular system</td><td>The muscular system is responsible for the movement of the human body. Muscles are the only tissue in the body that has the ability to contract and therefore move the other parts of the body. Attached to our bones are about 700 named muscles making up roughly half of our body weight. There are three types of muscle tissue: visceral, cardiac and skeletal.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Visceral muscle:</td><td>Found inside of organs such as the stomach, intestines, and blood vessels and is controlled by the unconscious part of the brain and is known as involuntary muscle. It has a smooth appearance.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cardiac muscle</td><td>It is only found in the heart and is involuntary muscle and auto rhythmic stimulated by a natural pacemaker and it is very strong. Cardiac and visceral muscles are primarily responsible for transporting substances,</td></tr> </table> | Osteoporosis | As we age we lose bone density, which makes our bones brittle and more likely to break. | Arthritis | Arthritis refers to joint pain or joint disease. | Scoliosis | This is a sideways curvature of the spine that occurs most often during the growth spurt just before puberty. Bone tuberculosis | TB | This TB is extra-pulmonary (TB outside the lungs) that affects, above all, the spine, long bones and joints. | The muscular system | The muscular system is responsible for the movement of the human body. Muscles are the only tissue in the body that has the ability to contract and therefore move the other parts of the body. Attached to our bones are about 700 named muscles making up roughly half of our body weight. There are three types of muscle tissue: visceral, cardiac and skeletal. | Visceral muscle: | Found inside of organs such as the stomach, intestines, and blood vessels and is controlled by the unconscious part of the brain and is known as involuntary muscle. It has a smooth appearance. | Cardiac muscle | It is only found in the heart and is involuntary muscle and auto rhythmic stimulated by a natural pacemaker and it is very strong. Cardiac and visceral muscles are primarily responsible for transporting substances, |
| Osteoporosis                                                                                                                                                                            | As we age we lose bone density, which makes our bones brittle and more likely to break.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |              |                                                                                         |           |                                                  |           |                                                                                                                                 |    |                                                                                                              |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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|               | <p>Skeletal muscle</p> <p>Tendons</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>like blood or food, from one part of the body to another. The final function of muscles is to generate body heat. Our muscular system generates a great deal of waste heat. Many small muscle contractions within the body produce our natural body heat. When we exert ourselves, the extra muscle contraction leads to a rise in body temperature and eventually sweating.</p> <p>This is the only voluntary muscle tissue in the body. Every action that a person consciously performs, like talking and writing, is controlled by skeletal muscle. Most skeletal muscles are attached to two bones across a joint and are very strong. Skeletal muscles are responsible for maintenance of our posture, body position and movement.</p> <p>Most skeletal muscles are connected to bones through tendons. Tendons are very strong and woven into the coverings of both muscles and bones.</p> |
| 10:30 – 11:00 | <p>Exercise 13 - Drawing exercise (30 mins) Skeletal and muscular systems</p> <p>At the table, participants mark on the A4 human form (photocopied from page 11) all the bones they have broken (fractured). They also include all other joint and ligament ailments they have or had. When everyone has completed the exercise on the A4 page, the participants should add their bone and muscular injuries and ailments, torn ligaments or tendons, old and current. They can mark these on the A4 page of the human body and write about the injury too in a few words.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11:00 – 13:00 | <p>Draw skeletal and muscular systems on map with all markings and broken bones.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 13:30 – 16:00 | <p>Printing of collograph.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

Find an image of the skeletal system, muscular system and organ system.

| Body map workshop Day Six – 01 April 2022 (3 hours)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |                              |
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| Introductions and ground rules; Recap; symbols; respiratory, digestive, and circulatory exercises; Life after school to present, written, drawing and sharing exercise; evaluation; and homework. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     |                              |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Exercise 14 – Homework (30 mins)</p> <p>Paste all the photocopies in reflection book and indicate on where from your reflection where you got hurt, broke any bones, birthmark, skin etc etc</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     |                              |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Exercise 15- Exercise – Body map exercise (60 mins)</p> <p>Following on reflection draw skeletal and muscular systems on map with all markings and broken bones.</p> <p>Following on early childhood life story and childhood drawings, participants include writings and drawings of their school years in lead pencil, following an anti-clockwise direction, going round the bottom of the body map. When writing and drawings are carefully arranged in the available space, they are gone over with permanent marker and given color.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |     |                              |
| 11:00 – 13:00                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Exercise 16 - Symbols – Conceptual drawing (60 mins)</p> <p>Sitting at the tables, the facilitator summarizes the progress made on the previous day and outlines exercises to be accomplished on day three. The session begins with information given by the facilitator about symbols and their meanings.</p> <p>A symbol is a material object that represents something abstract. The facilitator can select symbols from the template below, and/or come up with others she or he may think of, as examples. This self-reflective exercise requires of participants to decide on one symbol, that best represents their character and strength, and to draw the symbol in reflection book, and give it color, with reference to the meaning of color.</p> <table><tr><td>Dog</td><td>Courageous, vigilant, loyal.</td></tr></table> | Dog | Courageous, vigilant, loyal. |
| Dog                                                                                                                                                                                               | Courageous, vigilant, loyal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |     |                              |

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|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|               | Bee                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Hardworking, productive, communal.                                            |  |
|               | Dove                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Peace loving, freedom, loving Heart, Empathy, compassionate, loving, sincere. |  |
|               | People in a circle                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Friendship, cooperation, community-minded.                                    |  |
|               | An untieable knot                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Oneness, unity, commitment.                                                   |  |
|               | Tree                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Life, knowledge, connection for ancestors and family.                         |  |
|               | Candle                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Light, life, spiritual.                                                       |  |
|               | Fish                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Communal, life giving.                                                        |  |
|               | Justice, quest for truth.                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Rainbow, Positivist, hopeful, idealist, optimist.                             |  |
|               | Sickle and hoe                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Hardworking, hope in a fruitful harvest.                                      |  |
|               | Book                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Quest for knowledge, scholarly, spiritual.                                    |  |
|               | Flower                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Love, compassion, beauty.                                                     |  |
|               | Pitcher                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Provider, container of life.                                                  |  |
|               | The colors of a rainbow are:                                                                                                                                                                                                  | red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.                          |  |
|               | Watering can                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Service, nurturing. Scales                                                    |  |
|               | Exercise 17 - Symbols – Sharing exercise (30 mins)<br>Each participant shows their drawings to the group and explains why they have chosen the particular symbol that best represents themselves, and their choice of colors. |                                                                               |  |
| 13:30 – 16:00 | Printing techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                               |  |

| Body map workshop Day Seven – 02 April 2022 (3 hours)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| Introductions and ground rules; Recap; symbols; respiratory, digestive, and circulatory exercises; Life after school to present, written, drawing and sharing exercise; evaluation; and homework. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Exercise 18 - Symbols – drawing on the body map (30 mins)</p> <p>Participants return to their body maps to draw their symbols large and bold, either in the space above their heads, chest or stomach, in lead pencil. When participants are satisfied with their drawings, they give them color. Symbols are a visually important aspect of the body maps, so metallic paint can be used and the exercise should not be rushed.</p> <p>Materials: A3-size paper, pencils, erasers, oil pastels, pencil crayons, permanent markers and metallic paints.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                                                                     | Exercise 18 – Symbols continued – drawing on the body map (30 mins)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 11:00 – 13:00                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Exercise 19 - Respiratory, digestive, and (30 mins) circulatory systems</p> <p>With participants seated around the table, the facilitator provides information on three more systems of the human body: the respiratory, digestive and circulatory systems. The facilitator allows time for participants to add all relevant details on their A4 sheets of paper of the human body after system. When participants have completed this exercise, they can move to their body maps and include details related to the three systems on their body maps. The shared anatomy book will be useful, and the diagrams in the toolkit can assist participants to manage a degree of anatomical likeness too.</p> <p>The respiratory system<br/>The respiratory system is a series of organs responsible for taking in oxygen and expelling carbon dioxide. The primary organs are lungs, which carry out this exchange as we breathe. Your lungs are in your chest; they are so large that they take up most of the space in your chest. You have two lungs, but they are not the same size, the left lung is smaller because it shares the internal space with the heart. Our lungs are protected by our rib cage, which is made up of 12 sets of ribs connected to our spine in your back and go around your lungs to protect them. Beneath the lungs is the diaphragm, a muscle that works with your lungs to allow you to inhale (breathe in) and exhale (breathe out) air.</p> |

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|  | <p>From the outside, lungs are pink and squishy, like a sponge. At the bottom of the trachea or windpipe, there are two large tubes called the main stem bronchi; one heads left into the left lung, while the other heads right into the right lung. Each main stem bronchus then branches off into tubes, or bronchi, that get smaller and even smaller still, like branches on a big tree. The tiniest tubes are called bronchioles.</p> <p>As you breathe in, your diaphragm contracts so your lungs have more room to grow larger as they fill up with air. Your rib muscles also lift the ribs up and outward to give the lungs more space. When you inhale air through your mouth and nose, and the air goes down your trachea. Tiny hairs called cilia keep mucus and dirt out of the lungs. The air then goes through the series of branches in your lungs, through the bronchi and the bronchioles. The air finally ends up in the millions of alveoli that allow oxygen from the air to pass into your blood. All the cells in the body need oxygen every minute of the day. Oxygen passes through the walls of each alveolus into the tiny capillaries that surround it. The oxygen enters the blood in the tiny capillaries, hitching a ride on red blood cells traveling through blood vessels to the heart. The heart then sends the oxygenated blood out to all the cells in the body.</p> <p>When it's time to exhale, everything happens in reverse: Your diaphragm relaxes and moves up, pushing air out of the lungs. Your rib muscles become relaxed, and your ribs move in again, creating a smaller space in your chest. By now your cells have used the oxygen they need, and your blood is carrying carbon dioxide and other wastes that must leave your body. The blood comes back through the capillaries and the wastes enter the alveoli. Then you breathe them out in the reverse order of how they came in — the air goes through the bronchioles, out the bronchi, out the trachea, and finally out through your mouth and nose.</p> <p>Human Lungs</p> <p>The air that you breathe out contains wastes and carbon dioxide, and it's warm, too! As air travels through your body, it picks up heat along the way. Your lungs are important for breathing and also for talking. Above the trachea is the larynx or voice box. Across the voice box are two tiny ridges called vocal cords, which open and close to make sounds.</p> <p>When you exhale air from the lungs, it comes through the trachea and larynx and reaches the vocal cords. If the vocal cords are closed and the air flows between them, the vocal cords vibrate and a sound is made. The amount of air you blow out from your lungs determines how loud a sound will be and how long you can make the sound.</p> <p>Your lungs allow you to breathe, talk, shout, sing, laugh and cry. Exercise is good for every part of your body, and especially for your lungs and heart. When you take part in vigorous exercise your lungs require more air to give your cells the extra oxygen they need. As you breathe more deeply and take in more air, your lungs become stronger and better at supplying your body with the air it needs.</p> <p>Some respiratory diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuberculosis(TB)<br/>TB is an airborne bacterial infection that usually occurs in the lungs but it can spread anywhere through the bloodstream or lymph nodes. TB may remain inactive until the immune system becomes compromised. Symptoms include coughing, trouble breathing, fatigue, fever and sweating.</li> <li>• Bronchitis<br/>A viral infection and symptoms include difficulty in breathing and a hacking cough that produces phlegm. It is treated with rest, plenty of fluids, and avoiding smoking and fumes.</li> <li>• Allergies Symptoms<br/>include itchy eyes and skin, sneezing, nasal congestion, wheezing and rash.</li> <li>• Seasonal allergies<br/>result from grass, weed, tree pollen and molds.</li> <li>• Hypotension<br/>Also called high blood pressure is a long-term medical condition in which the blood pressure in the arteries is persistently elevated. Causes of high blood pressure include stress.</li> <li>• Asthma Symptoms include coughing and wheezing.<br/>Chest tightness is common in an asthma attack and can be controlled with proper treatment.</li> </ul> |
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|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pneumonia</li> </ul> <p>A lung infection caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi. Microorganisms grow and thrive in the lungs, creating difficult symptoms. The air sacs become inflamed and may fill up with fluid, which disrupts the flow of oxygen. Most people recover after a few weeks. Symptoms of chronic pneumonia include coughing up blood, swollen lymph nodes, chills, and lasting fever.</p> <p>After this information, the facilitator asks participants whether they suffer or have suffered from any respiratory conditions. If they do, they are asked to write down what these conditions are on the A4 picture of the body.</p> <p>Body mapping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The digestive system</li> </ul> <p>The digestive system is made up of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and the liver, pancreas and gallbladder. The GI tract is a series of hollow organs joined in a long twisting tube from the mouth to the anus. The hollow organs that make up the GI tract are the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine and anus. The liver, pancreas and gallbladder are the solid organs of the digestive system.</p> <p>Each part of the digestive system helps to move food and liquid through the GI tract, breaking down food and liquid into smaller parts so that the body can absorb and move the nutrients to where they are needed. Nerves and hormones help control the digestive process. You chew food that enters the mouth and your tongue pushes the food into your throat. The epiglottis folds over your windpipe to prevent choking allowing the food pass into the esophagus.</p> <p>Once you begin swallowing, the process becomes automatic. Your brain signals the muscles of the esophagus and peristalsis begins. When the food reaches the end of your esophagus, a muscle called the sphincter relaxes and lets the food pass into your stomach. This sphincter usually stays closed to keep what is in your stomach from flowing back into your esophagus.</p> <p>After the food enters the stomach, the stomach muscles mix the food and liquid with digestive juices. The stomach slowly empties its contents into your small intestine. The muscles of the small intestine mix food with digestive juices from the pancreas, liver and intestine and push the mixture forward for further digestion. The walls of the small intestine absorb water and the digestive nutrients into your bloodstream. As peristalsis continues, the waste products of the digestive process move into the large intestine. The large intestine absorbs water and</p> |
| 13:30 – 16:00 | Printing of collograph.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

Did you study and or attend any courses after leaving school?

- What did you study and what courses did you successfully complete?
- What work experience have you had?
- Are you currently employed or unemployed?
- What work do you do?
- When did you get married and to whom?
- Describe the ceremony and how you felt on the day.
- How many children do you have, what are their names and ages?
- What challenges have you experienced as a parent?
- How did conflict disrupt your life?
- Write about your experiences of the conflict?
- From your perspective, what were the causes of the conflict?
- What post-conflict challenges have you faced?

| Body map workshop Day Eight – 03 April 2022 (3 hours)<br>9:30 – 13:00                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| Introductions and ground rules; Recap; symbols; respiratory, digestive, and circulatory exercises; Life after school to present, written, drawing and sharing exercise; evaluation; and homework. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:30 – 10:00                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Exercise 20 Digestive System (30 mins)</p> <p>Changes the waste from liquid into stool. Peristalsis helps move the stool into your rectum. The rectum stores stool until it pushes it out of your anus during a bowel movement.</p> <p>Common gastrointestinal conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acid reflux &amp; heartburn</li> </ul> <p>Acid reflux is the backward flow of stomach acid into the esophagus. Sometimes acid reflux progresses and is called GERD, the most common symptom is heartburn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peptic ulcers</li> </ul> <p>These are sores that develop in the lining of the stomach, lower esophagus, or small intestine and are fairly common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)</li> </ul> <p>A common disorder that affects the large intestine. Symptoms include cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, gas and diarrhea and constipation, or both.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallbladder disorders &amp; gallstones</li> </ul> <p>Symptoms may include upper right side pain in the abdomen along with fever and shivering. When gallstones block the gallbladder completely, it becomes infected. It is more common with diabetes and heart disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas)</li> </ul> <p>Pancreatitis happens when the digestive enzymes are activated before they are released into the stomach and begin attacking the pancreas, often by long term alcohol use, or gallstones and hereditary disorders, such as cystic fibrosis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendicitis</li> </ul> <p>An inflammation of the appendix which causes pain in the lower right abdomen. An appendectomy is the surgical removal of the appendix.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diarrhea</li> </ul> <p>Loose, watery stools discharged from the bowels frequently. It usually lasts a few days and disappears without any treatment. It can be chronic or acute when it lasts for more than two days. It is a common problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hemorrhoids</li> </ul> <p>These are swollen veins in the lowest part of the rectum and anus. Sometimes the swollen veins stretch so that the veins bulge and get irritated, especially during a bowel movement. Swollen hemorrhoids are also called piles. They cause itching, pain and sometimes bleeding.</p> <p>Toolkit – reflection book</p> <p>After going over the digestive system, the facilitator asks participants whether they suffer from any GI conditions. If they do, they are asked to write down on the A4 picture of the body what these conditions are.</p> |
| 10:30 – 11:00                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Exercise 21 – Circulatory system (30 mins)</p> <p>The circulatory system, also called the cardiovascular system, is an organ system that permits blood to circulate and transport nutrients, oxygen, hormones, and blood cells to and from the cells in the body to provide nourishment and help fighting disease, stabilize temperature and pH and maintain homeostasis. The circulatory system includes the lymphatic system, which circulates lymph.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blood</li> </ul> <p>Is a fluid consisting of plasma, red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets that is circulated by the heart through the vascular system, carrying oxygen and nutrients to and waste materials away from the body tissue. Lymph is recycled excess plasma after it has been filtered and returned to the lymphatic system. The lymph, lymph nodes and lymph vessels form the lymphatic system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cardiovascular system is comprised of the blood, heart and blood vessels.</li> </ul> <p>The circulatory system of the blood has two components: a systemic circulation and pulmonary circulation. Humans have a closed cardiovascular system, meaning that the blood never leaves the network of arteries, veins and capillaries.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



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|               | <p>The lymphatic system clears away infection and keeps your body fluids in balance. It is an open system providing an accessory route for excess fluid between the cells to be returned to the blood.</p> <p>Many diseases affect the circulatory system, including cardiovascular disease affecting the cardiovascular system, and lymphatic disease affecting the lymphatic system.</p> <p>Human Heart and Circulation (30 mins)<br/>Blue – Deoxygenated / Red – Oxygenated</p> <p>Some cardiovascular conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiovascular disease<br/>This generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain (angina) or stroke. Other heart conditions, such as those that affect your heart muscle, valves or rhythm, are forms of heart disease.</li> <li>• Lymphatic disease<br/>If it is not working properly, fluids build up in your tissues and cause swelling, called lymphedema.</li> <li>• Blood related diseases<br/>HIV/AIDS HIV is a virus that attacks and gradually destroys the immune system. AIDS stands for 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.' The virus is mainly transmitted through sexual intercourse but it can also be passed down from mother to child during pregnancy, acquired via blood transfusion with infected blood, or through the sharing of needles, or needle-stick injuries.</li> <li>• Diabetes<br/>A chronic systemic disease associated with abnormally high levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood. Insulin produced by the pancreas lowers blood glucose. Absence or insufficient production of insulin, or an inability of the body to properly use insulin causes diabetes. After offering this information, the facilitator asks participants whether they suffer from any circulatory conditions. If they do, they are asked to write down on the A4 picture of the body what these conditions are in reflection book.</li> </ul> <p>Exercise 22 - Drawing on the body map (60 mins)</p> <p>Participants include conditions they suffer from related to the respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems on their body maps. They can explore creative ways to depict strokes, HIV/AIDS, acid buildup etc. The anatomy book available is a useful reference, as is the manual. When participants have completed this, they can continue working on their school years writing and drawings on their body maps.</p> |
| 11:00 – 13:00 | <p>At the end of the day participants are asked to say in one word how they feel at the end of the third day. These one-word evaluations can be recorded by the facilitator or written on an A1 sheet of paper by a volunteer participant. If the same word is used more than once, tick it as many times as it is used.</p> <p>day Three Homework</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to read through what they have written in their journals about their post-school years to the present, underline the people who were positive influences, and continue writing about that period of their lives, if so inclined.</p> <p>The facilitator is encouraged to write her or his reflections of the day, transcribe/enter the one-word evaluations in her or his journal and prepare for Day Four by reading the toolkit and preparing the workshop venue and materials and the exercises. The facilitator should analyze the body maps to see who is lagging behind in the exercises, as these participants must be provided extra support on Day Four.</p> <p>Day Three •</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 13:30 – 16:00 | Printing techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |